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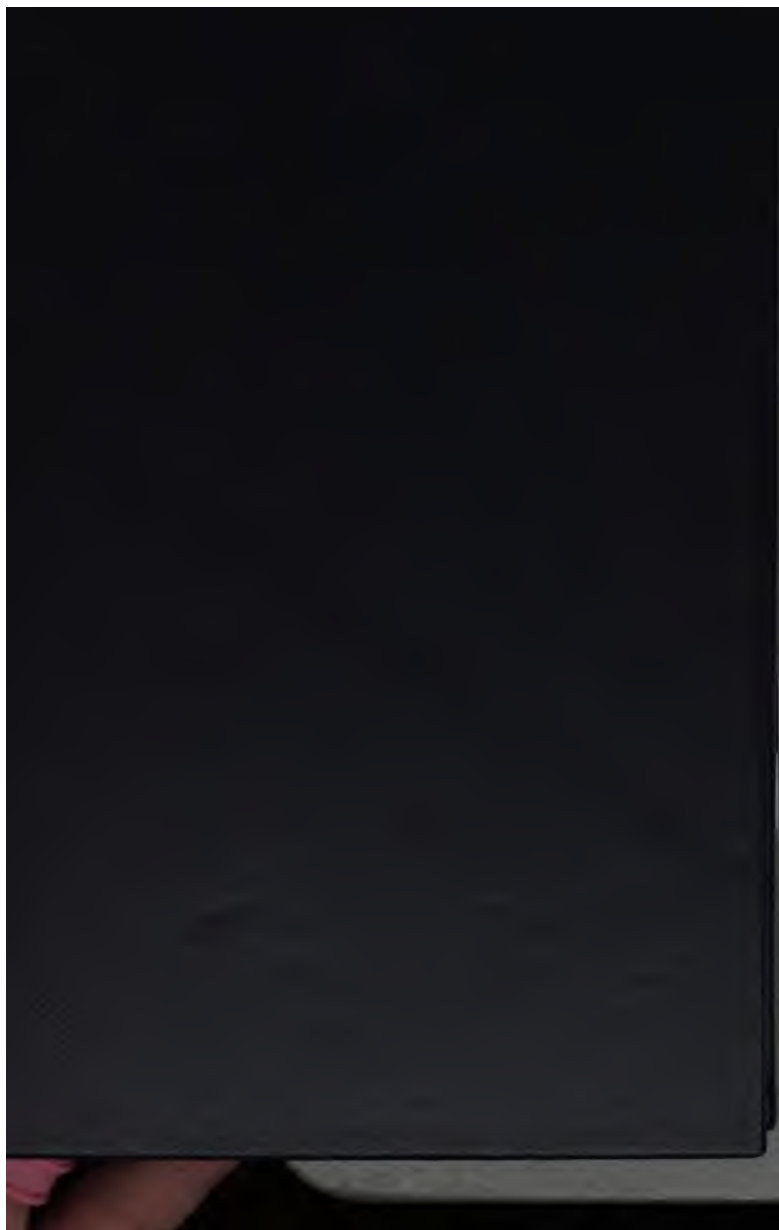
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EURIPIDES.

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EURIPIDES.

TRANSLATED BY

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‘ A correct translation, always faithful, sometimes elevated.’—BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

EURIPIDES.

THE pleasure which we receive from the admired writings of antiquity in a manner allies our minds to the minds of the illustrious writers; we contract a love for them, and interest ourselves in every circumstance that interested them. This affection, which arises from the love of excellence, natural to the well-disposed mind, induces us to inquire after even the minutest particulars of their lives and fortunes; and Homer, poor and blind, is not less the object of our attention than his hero Achilles. The life of a retired scholar cannot indeed be supposed to present us with great and striking events; but it may convey more useful instructions, such as come nearer to our own business and bosoms; it may encourage the man of genius to exert his talents so as to render himself

agreeable and useful to his fellow-citizens, to procure their esteem while he lives, and to preserve his name from oblivion, so dreaded by the generous mind. Few of the great writers of ancient times have a juster claim to this attention than the virtuous, the modest, the amiable poet, with whose remaining works the English reader is now presented.

The prodigious armament with which Xerxes invaded Greece is well known : when he was advancing towards Attica, to revenge the defeat of his father's forces at Marathon, the Athenians, by the advice of Themistocles, retired with their effects to Salamis, Trœzene, and Ægina. Among those who took refuge at Salamis were Mnesarchus and Clito, the parents of Euripides, who was born in that island on the very day in which the Grecians there gained that memorable victory over the Persian fleet. From the best authorities we learn that his parents were persons of rank and fortune ; particularly that his mother was of very noble birth ; for no regard is due to Aristophanes, who spared no good man, and who hated Euripides. They educated their son with great attention, and at a considerable expense : besides the *athletic exercises*, in which he excelled, he was

taught grammar, music, and painting: in this enchanting art he made a great proficiency, particularly in historical pictures, and first designed the figure of Agamemnon at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the execution of which has rendered the name of Timanthes immortal. He now applied himself to the study of oratory under the refined and learned Prodicus, who admitted none to his school but the sons of great and noble families: the celebrated Pericles was also formed under this excellent master, who is well known from his elegant and instructive fable, the Judgment of Hercules, which has been adorned with all the graces of English poetry: from this school Euripides derived that copious stream of eloquence which flows through all his writings, and which rendered him the poet of orators. Demosthenes was so sensible of his superior excellence in this, that he studied him with peculiar attention; Cicero held him in the highest estimation even to his last moments; for when those that murdered him came up to his litter, they found him reading the *Medea* of this author; and Quintilian recommends him to the real orator as a more useful model than either the sublime and daring *Æschylus*, or the grave and majestic *Sophocles*.

About this time, Anaxagoras of Clazomene transferred the school of Thales from Ionia to Athens. This truly great man exploded the doctrines of fate and chance; and, acknowledging a God incorporeal, eternal, and of infinite wisdom, ascribed the creation of all things, motion, and order, to pure and perfect intellect: he seemed formed to enlighten the world; but the darkness was too thick to be dispelled by less than divine power; an important truth, which Socrates soon after saw and acknowledged. The grave and contemplative mind of Euripides was peculiarly formed for these sublime inquiries; he therefore no more attended the gymnasium, but applied himself intirely to these studies under Anaxagoras, till this philosopher was accused of impiety for saying that the sun was a burning mass of fire. Pericles generously defended his master, and by his eloquence and interest prevailed so far, that the sentence of death was softened to a fine and banishment. Euripides, perceiving the danger of attempting to emancipate reason from the slavery of received opinions, and unwilling to give up his studious course of life, turned his thoughts to the drama, ambitious of some share of that glory *which Æschylus* had already acquired, and *Sopho-*

cles was then acquiring. He was very young when he engaged in this undertaking, but he had every qualification which could insure success : devoted from his early years to literature, educated under the best masters, conversant in the deepest philosophy and the sublimest studies, an exact observer of men and manners, tender and even melancholy in his disposition, alive to all the finest feelings of humanity, and uniformly virtuous in his life, as if Nature and Art had vied with each other to form this excellent man, it is no wonder that he soon became the delight and ornament of his country ; and, what perhaps is a more solid honor to him, he contracted an early friendship with Socrates, who was twelve years younger than himself, and survived him almost six years : this friendship, formed on the firmest principles of virtue and wisdom, and cemented by a similarity of manners and studies, continued indissoluble. These studies form the history of his life from the eighteenth to the seventy-second year of his age, during which time he composed seventy-five tragedies, frequently retiring to his native Salamis, and there indulging his melancholy Muse in a rude and gloomy cavern.

His reputation was now so illustrious, that Archelaus, king of Macedonia, invited him to his

court: this monarch to his many royal virtues added a fondness for literature and the Muses, and had drawn to him from Greece many who excelled in the polite arts, particularly those who were eminent for their learning, philosophers and poets. Euripides, after much and earnest invitation, at length complied with the king's request, and went to Pella, where he was received with every mark of esteem and honor. Archelaus knew how to value a man of modesty and learning, a lover of truth and virtue; but he particularly admired the disinterestedness, the amiable candor, and gentleness of manners, which distinguished Euripides, and made him worthy of the liberality, the esteem, and affection of such a king. In this court at this time, among many other eminent men, were Agatho, an excellent tragic poet, an honest and agreeable man, a friend and admirer of Euripides, Timotheus the famous musician, and Zeuxis the celebrated painter: in this society Euripides lived happy, beloved, and honored, and died lamented in the third year after his coming to Macedonia, and the seventy-fifth year of his age. Archelaus mourned for him as for a near relation, buried him among the kings of Macedonia, and erected a *magnificent monument* to his memory.

The news of his death was brought to Athens as

Sophocles was about to exhibit one of his tragedies: he appeared in mourning, and made his actors come on the stage without crowns: this great poet had long been the intimate friend of Euripides: he was then in the ninetieth year of his age, and died about the end of this year. The Athenians immediately sent ambassadors to Archelaus, requesting his permission to remove the bones of Euripides into his own country: this the king and the Macedonians firmly refused; and as they could not obtain his ashes, they raised a cenotaph to their poet in the way that led from the city to the Piræus.

Euripides was to Æschylus what Raffaele was to Michael Angelo:* in Æschylus all is inspiration; his genius is bold and fiery; his ideas are vast and sublime; his persons are a superior order of beings: Euripides owed more to study, but it was chiefly the study of nature: his genius is bright and glowing; his images are vivid and deeply impressed; his characters designed with propriety, and supported with dignity; but he is chiefly distinguished from all other writers by the purity and copiousness of his moral sentiments,

* See and admire the President's Discourse delivered in the Royal Academy, December 10, 1772.

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and his irresistible power in moving the tender passions: for the first he was indebted to his education under Prodicus and Anaxagoras, and his friendship with Socrates; the latter he drew from his own heart: what he felt warmly, he painted pathetically; like our own Spenser,

He steep'd in tears the piteous lines he wrote,
The tenderest bard that e'er impassion'd song.

THE BACCHÆ.

EURIP.

VOL. 1.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BACCHUS.

TIRESIAS.

CADMUS.

PENTHEUS.

AGAVE.

OFFICER.

MESSENGERS.

CHORUS of Asiatic Bacchæ.

THE BACCHÆ.

ARGUMENT.

PENTHEUS, the son of Echion, by Agave, the daughter of Cadmus, was king of Thebes. In spite of the remonstrances of his grandfather Cadmus, and the denunciations of the prophet Tiresias, he impiously persists in denying the divinity of Bacchus; and when the Theban women quit the city, to celebrate the orgies of this deity, affecting to believe that the solemnity is prejudicial to female modesty, he orders the god, who conducts the festival in the disguise of a young man, to be apprehended. The doors of the prison, in which Bacchus is confined, opening of their own accord, Pentheus becomes more irritated, and commands his soldiers to destroy the whole band of Bacchanals. This cruel order is however arrested by the interposition of the god, who inspires the monarch with a desire of witnessing the mysterious rites. For this purpose he hides himself in a wood on Mount Cithæron: but here his curiosity soon proves fatal; for by the artifice of the injured deity, he is discovered in his place of concealment by the whole female company. These, mistaking the unhappy monarch for a young lion, rush simultaneously on him; and he is torn to pieces by his mother Agave, who is soon after restored to a full sense of the fatal effects of her frenzy, and retires to Thes-saly in despair; while Bacchus foretels to the disconsolate Cadmus the calamities which he is destined to undergo, and the deliverance which finally awaits him and his wife Harmonia.—[The scene is at Thebes, before the vestibule of the palace of Pentheus.]

BACCHUS.

Now to this land, the realms of Thebes, I come,
Bacchus, the son of Jove, whom Semele,

Daughter of Cadmus, 'midst the lightning flames
 Brought forth; the god beneath a mortal's form
 Concealing, on the brink of Dirce's fount, 5
 And where Ismenus rolls his stream, I tread.
 I see my mother's tomb raised near the house
 In which she perish'd by the thunder; yet
 Its ruins smoke, the ethereal fire yet lives,
 The everlasting mark of Juno's hate 10
 Wreak'd on my mother. Cadmus hath my praise,
 Who to his daughter raised this shrine, the ground
 Hallow'd from vulgar tread: the clustering vine
 I gave to wreath around its verdant boughs.
 Leaving the Lydian fields profuse of gold, 15
 The Phrygian, and the Persian plains exposed
 To the sun's rays, and from the tower'd forts
 Of Bactria passing, from the frozen soil
 Of Media, from Arabia the Bless'd,
 And all that tract of Asia which along 20
 The salt sea lies, where with barbarians mix'd
 The Grecians many a stately-structured town
 Inhabit, to this city, first of Greece,
 I come, here lead my dance, my mystic rites
 Establish here, that mortals may confess 25
 The manifest god. Of all the realms of Greece
 In Thebes I first have raised my shouts, thus clothed
 With a fawn's dappled hide, and in my hand
 Thy thyrsus hold, this ivy-wreathed spear:
 For that the sisters of my mother (least 30
 Becomes it them) declared that not from Jove
 I sprung, but, pregnant by some mortal's love,
 That Semele on Jove had falsely charged
 Her fault, the poor device of Cadmus; whence
 They arrogantly said that Jove enraged 35
Slew her, because she falsely urged his love
As her excuse: for this my maddening stings
Impell'd them to forsake the house, and roam

Distracted o'er the mountain, where perforce
 They wear the habit of my orgies. All 40
 The females, who from Cadmus draw their birth,
 Have I driven frantic from their houses forth;
 And with the sons of Cadmus mix'd beneath
 The dark-green firs, whose boughs o'er-roof the
 rocks,
 They sit. This city must be taught to know, 45
 Howe'er averse, that with my mystic rites
 She is not hallow'd; and that I defend
 The cause of Semele, to mortal men
 Avow'd a god, the son of thundering Jove.
 Cadmus his honors and imperial state 50
 Resigns to Pentheus, from his daughter sprung:
 He with profane contempt against me wars,
 Drives me from the libations, in his vows
 Deems me not worthy mention: for which cause
 To him, and all the Thebans, will I show 55
 Myself a god. Things well appointed here,
 Hence to some other realm will I remove,
 And show myself: but should the Theban state
 In rage attempt with hostile arms to drive
 My Bacchæ from their confines, I will head 60
 My Mænades, and lead them to the fight.
 For this have I put off my godlike form,
 Taking the semblance of a mortal man.
 But you, my frolic train, who left the heights
 Of Tmolus, Lydian mount; ye female troop, 65
 Whom from barbaric coasts I led with me
 Associates, and attendants on my march,
 Resume your Phrygian timbrels framed by me
 And mother Rhea, round the royal house
 Of Pentheus let their hoarse notes roar, that Thebes
 May see you. To Cithæron's heights I go, 71
 And *with my circling Bacchæ* join the dance.

CHORUS.

PROSODE.

From Tmolus, whose majestic brow
 Views Asia stretching wide below,
 Light my frolic steps advance, 75
 And to Bacchus lead the dance ;
 An easy, pleasing task, whilst high
 Swells to the god the voice of harmony.
 Is there who comes along the way ?
 Are there who in their houses stay ? 80
 Hence, begone, whoe'er you are.
 To hallow'd sounds let each his voice prepare.
 The song to Bacchus will I raise,
 Hymning in order meet his praise.

STROPHE I.

His happy state what blessings crown, 85
 To whom the mysteries of the gods are known !
 By these his life he sanctifies ;
 And, deep imbibed their chaste and cleaning lore,
 Hallows his soul for converse with the skies,
 Enraptured ranging the wild mountains o'er ; 90
 The mighty mother's orgies leading,
 He his head with ivy shading,
 His light spear wreathed with ivy-twine,
 To Bacchus holds the rites divine.
 Haste then, ye Bacchæ, haste, 95
 Attend your god, the son of heaven's high king ;
 From Phrygia's mountains wild and waste
 To beauteous-structured Greece your Bacchus bring.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Him, as the pangs of child-birth came,
 Whilst all around her flash'd the lightning's flame, 100
 Untimely did his mother bear,
Then in the thunder's volley'd blaze expire.

But favoring Jove, with all a father's care,
 Snatch'd his loved infant from the blasting fire,
 And, hid from Juno's jealous eye, 105
 Closed the young Bacchus in his thigh,
 And round the golden cincture clasp'd
 Till the destined months elapsed,
 Then gave the god to light,
 His horned head with dragon-wreath entwined: 110
 Hence on their savage-nursing height
 The Mænades with these their tresses bind.

STROPHE II.

Illustrious Thebes, whose fostering arms
 Rear'd the young Semele's advancing charms,
 With ivy crown thy royal head, 115
 Bid the green smilax all around thee bloom,
 And all around its clustering berries spread;
 The oak's fresh verdure, or the fir's dark gloom
 Before thee hold, and join our band;
 Soon shall dance each raptured land; 120
 And o'er thy spotted vestments throw
 Soft-wreathing wool as white as snow.
 The wanton wands among
 Be hallow'd. To the mountain's craggy brow
 He leads his female train along, 125
 Who from their hands the useless distaffs throw.

ANTISTROPHE II.

O ye Curetes, friendly band,
 You, the bless'd natives of Crete's sacred land,
 Who tread those groves, which, darkening round,
 O'er infant Jove their sheltering branches spread,
 The Corybantes in their caves profound, 131
 The triple crest high waving on their head,
 This timbrel framed, whilst clear and high
 Swell'd the Bacchic symphony,

116 The smilax is the yew-tree.

The Phrygian pipe attempering sweet 135
 Their voices to response meet,
 And placed in Rhea's hands :
 The frantic Satyrs to the rites advance,
 The Bacchæ join the festive bands,
 And raptured lead the trieteric dance. 140

EPODE.

Raptured, when from the heights descending,
 His nimbly-bounding train attending,
 He rushes to the vales below,
 Whilst loose his spotted vestments flow,
 Pleased with the wild goat's offer'd blood, 145
 Its flesh undress'd his followers' food.
 To Phrygia's steeps, to Lydia's ridges high
 He leads, exulting leads his train,
 Whilst Evøe, Evøe, is the joyful cry,
 And, as they pass, through every plain 150
 Flows milk, flows wine, the nectar'd honey flows,
 And round each soft gale Syrian odors throws.
 But Bacchus, waving in his hand
 The torch that from his hallow'd wand
 Flames high, his roving Bacchæ leads, 155
 And shouting as he nimbly treads,
 Flings to the wanton wind his streaming hair,
 And wakes the rapture-breathing air ;
 Haste, ye Bacchæ, haste your flight ;
 From the gold-prolific height 160
 Of Tmolus, haste your frolic train,
 And to Bacchus raise the strain ;
 To the deep-toned timbrel's sound
 Evøe, Evøe shout around.
 Loud the Phrygian cries repeat, 165
 Whilst the flute, with accord sweet
Breathing midst your sacred play,
Bids your feet its notes obey,

As with measured steps ye go
 To the mountain's craggy brow ; 170
 Like the colt with wanton pride
 Bounding by its mother's side,
 Up the ridgy height advance,
 And to Bacchus lead the dance.

TIRESIAS, CADMUS, CHORUS.

TIR. Who at the gates calls Cadmus from the house,
 Agenor's son, that Sidon's city left, 176
 And built the towers of Thebes? Let him be told
 Tiresias seeks him ; wherefore I am come
 He knows, the compact which my age hath form'd
 With his maturer age, to take with him 180
 The thyrsus, the fawn's spotted skin to wear,
 And with the clustering ivy crown my head.

CAD. My honor'd friend, it joy'd me in the house
 To hear thy voice, for thine is wisdom's voice.
 Accountred with these ensigns of the god 185
 I come prepared ; him, of my daughter born,
 Declared a god to mortals, it behoves me,
 Far as I may, to grace with highest honors.
 Where shall we form the dance? Where fix our foot?
 Where toss our hoary locks? Be thou my guide, 190
 Thy age conducting mine, for thou art wise.
 May I with foot unwearied through the night
 And through the day the lengthen'd measure lead,
 Shaking the thyrsus : for unactive ease
 Our age forgets.

TIR. Like thee I feel new life, 195
 Youth springs afresh, and dares the pleasing toil.

CAD. Shall then my chariot bear us to the heights?

TIR. That were not equal honor to the god.

CAD. Old as I am then I will lead thy age.

TIR. The god shall lead us thither without toil. 200

CAD. Shall we alone to Bacchus lead the dance ?

TIR. We only judge aright ; unwise the rest.

CAD. The heights are distant, hang thou on my hand.

TIR. Give me thy hand ; thus side by side we go.

CAD. It is not mine, a mortal born, to slight 205

The gods, nor with irreverent eye to scan

Their deity : the instructions of our fathers,

From earliest times deliver'd down, we hold ;

No argument shall shake them, though devised

With all the subtlety of deepest thought. 210

Some one will say, I reverence not my age,

Joining the dance, my head with ivy wreathed ;

But not distinctly did the god declare

If the fresh youth should lead the dance, or those

Of riper years ; from every age he claims 215

These common honors ; none exempt, from all

This reverence is his due. But since this light

Thine eyes behold not, I will be to thee

A prophet, each occurrence to explain.

Pentheus, to whom the sceptre of these realms 220

I gave, Echion's son, with speed advances :

He looks aghast : what tidings doth he bring ?

PENTHEUS, CADMUS, TIRESIAS, CHORUS.

PEN. After a casual absence from this land

Return'd I hear strange evils in the city ;

That all our women, from their houses fled, 225

Pretending rites to Bacchus, wildly range

The tangled woods that shade the mountain's brow,

To welcome this new god, whoe'er he is,

And honor him with dances : in the midst

Stand goblets full of wine ; whilst some apart 230

Fly to the lonely shades, in secret bowers

Their paramours embracing ; their pretence,

The mystic worship of the Mænades ;

But Venus in their rites hath greater share
 Than Bacchus. Some I seized; and these in bonds
 The public prisons straitly guarded hold. 236
 The absent from their heights will I dislodge,
 Ino, and her who to Echion bore me,
 Agave, and the mother of Actæon
 Autonoe: these in chains of iron bound 240
 Soon from their wicked revelry shall cease.
 They say too that a stranger is arrived,
 A cheat, a sorcerer, from the Lydian land,
 His golden tresses waving from his head
 In order'd ringlets, of a roseate hue, 245
 The grace of love bright sparkling in his eyes.
 He with the younger females all the day
 Holds converse, all the night, mysterious rites
 To Bacchus feigning. If beneath this roof
 I catch him, he no more shall wave his wand 250
 With ivy rattling, no more shake his locks,
 His head lopp'd off. This Bacchus he reports
 To be a god, whom Jove, he says, of old
 Sew'd in his thigh; but in the lightning's flames
 He perish'd with his mother, vengeance due 255
 For her false tale of Jove's connubial bed.
 Doth not this call aloud for punishment,
 This stranger's insolence, whoe'er he be,
 Affronting us with such rude outrages?
 And here 's another wonder; I behold 260
 The seer Tiresias habited alike
 With the fawn's dappled skin; and Cadmus too,
 My mother's father, shake his Bacchic wand,
 Sight ludicrous; nor, sire, can I approve
 To see your age of reason so devoid. 265
 Wilt thou not shake the ivy from thy head?
 Wilt thou not throw the thyrsus from thy hand?
 Thy counsel *this*, Tiresias; this new god
 To mortals introducing, wouldst thou make him

Observe the flight of birds, and from the flames 270
 Receive the hire: but that thy hoary hairs
 Protect thee, thou shouldst sit in chains amidst
 These madding dames, for such pernicious rites
 Induced. To females when the joy of wine
 Flows round the festive table, I pronounce 275
 That in such orgies there is nothing good.

CHO. O Piety! Reverest thou not the gods,
 Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sow'd?
 Son of Echion, why defame thy race!

TIR. A wise man, when he takes occasions fair 280
 To hold discourse, finds words that promptly flow
 To grace his argument. Thou hast a tongue
 As voluble as Wisdom, but thy words
 Have not her power. A dangerous citizen
 Is that audacious, pealing orator, 285
 Who lacks discretion. This new god, whom thou
 So in derision callest, shall be great,
 How great, I have not words to express, through
 Greece.

There are two powers, young man, to mortal life
 Of chief account; the goddess Ceres one, 290
 She is the Earth, call her by either name;
 With dry and solid aliment by her
 Is man sustain'd: of different nature comes
 This son of Semele the grape's moist juice,
 His own invention he on man bestow'd: 295
 This to unhappy mortals from their griefs
 Gives respite, with the flowing vine when fill'd,
 Gives sleep, and sweet oblivion of the cares
 Each day brings with it; a more healing power
 No medicine boasts. He to the gods, himself 300
 Sprung from a god, is in libation pour'd,
 That mortals might through him enjoy the sweets
 Of life; yet thy rude tongue insultingly
 Derides him, in the thigh of Jove as sew'd.

I will inform thee what this means : when Jove 305
 The new-born babe snatch'd from the lightning flames,
 And bore him to Olympus, Juno sought
 To cast him from the skies ; to elude her aims,
 Jove, as a god, this artful plan devised :
 Part of the air, which round enrings the earth, 310
 He burst, and lodged the child an hostage there
 From Juno's angry efforts : but in time
 Men fabled that Jove lodged him in his thigh,
 The ambiguous phrase mistaking. But this god
 Hath a prophetic power ; his mystic rites 315
 Breathe much of inspiration ; when he flows
 Abundant on the soul, his frantic train
 He forms to tell events of times to come.
 Nor shrinks he from the toils of Mars ; in arms
 The close-ranged squadrons he with wild dismay 320
 Confounds and scatters, ere the lifted spear
 Flashes with spear : from Bacchus springs this terror.
 And thou shalt see him bounding o'er the rocks
 Of Delphi, striking with his blazing torch
 Its double-pointed cliffs, his Bacchic wand 325
 Shaking, and great through Greece. Believe my
 words,
 And be persuaded, Pentheus : pride thee not
 In thy imperial power, thy rule o'er men,
 Nor glory in thy wisdom ; that vain thought
 Is but the feverish sickness of the soul : 330
 But in thy realms receive the god, and pour
 The rich libations, join the Bacchic train,
 And crown thy head. No female he perforce
 Hurries to wanton love ; for to his nature
 In all things decent modesty is dear : 335
 Reflect on this : no woman in his rites,
 Come she with chaste and sober mind, shall know
 The soil of violation. Secst thou this ?

When at the gates the thronging multitude
 Stands round thee, and with high applause the name
 Of Pentheus through the state is sounded wide, 341
 It gives thee joy; and he, I ween, is touch'd,
 When honor'd, with delight. With reverence then
 Myself and Cadmus, whom thy taunts deride,
 Will be with ivy crown'd, and join the dance, 345
 A hoary pair; yet must we join the dance,
 Nor war against the god, urged by thy words;
 For thou art mad, and thy deep malady
 No medicines, save these, have power to heal.

CHO. Thy words, old man, disgrace not Phœbus :
 wise 350

Art thou thus honoring Bacchus, the great god.

CAD. Well hath Tiresias counsell'd thee, my son ;
 Abide with us, no outrage to the laws,
 For now thou fliest from us, 'midst thy boast
 Of wisdom most unwise. Were he no god, 355
 As thy bold words aver, let him from thee
 Receive that title, and the glorious falsehood
 Avow, as he was born of Semele ;
 So shall she seem the mother of a god,
 On us devolving honor, and our race. 360
 Seest thou Actæon's miserable fate,
 Rent piecemeal by the ravenous dogs his hand
 Had cherish'd? For his skill he proudly vaunted
 More than Diana's in the woodland chase.
 Be warn'd, come hither : I with ivy wreaths 365
 Will crown thy brows : with us revere the god.

PEN. Thou shalt not touch me, going as thou art
 To this wild riot, nor on me wipe off
 Thy folly : but this master of thy madness
 Shall feel my vengeance. Go, this instant go 370
 One of you, batter down, o'erturn the seat
Where he observes the flight of birds ; rend, crush,

And make a general havoc ; to the winds,
The tempests, toss his crowns : so shall I gall
him

Most feelingly. Go you, retrace the haunts 375
Of this lascivious, female-figured stranger,
That 'mongst our women spreads a new disease,
And with pollution stains the nuptial bed.
If you can take him, bring him hither bound,
That he may die, crush'd with o'erwhelming stones,
And solemnise unpleasant rites at Thebes. 381

TIR. Wretch as thou art, thou know'st not what
thou say'st ;

Thy reason fail'd before, but this is now
Outrageous madness. Cadmus, let us go,
And deprecate from him, harsh though he be, 385
And from the state, the vengeance of the god.
Come thou with me, but take thine ivy wand ;
Try to be my support, I will be thine ;
Unseemly would it be for two old men
To fall : thus let us go ; the son of Jove 390
Must be obey'd. O Cadmus, to thy house
His rage bodes rage : this with a prophet's skill
I speak not, but from circumstance ; such meed
Hath a fool's tongue, which vents his foolish thought.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Holy, by the gods revered, 395
Holy queen, who joy'st to wave
O'er the earth thy golden wing,
Goddess, hear'st thou Pentheus rave
With unhallow'd menacing?
Are his taunts 'gainst Bacchus heard? 400

395 The goddess Nemesis is here invoked.

'Midst Pleasure's strain, with beauteous garlands
crown'd,

The son of Semele delights to advance,
Delights to lead the festive dance,
Pleased with the soft flute's dulcet sound ;
First of the gods he charms to rest 405
The anguish of the afflicted breast,
When amidst the feast divine
Sparkling flow the joys of wine,
And o'er the ivy-shaded heads
The balmy dews of sleep the goblet sheds. 410

ANTISTROPHE I.

When the rude unbridled tongue
Vents the mad and wayward thought,
Vengeance is its destined end ;
But the soul with wisdom fraught
Calms the life, and, Peace its friend, 415
Holds its state securely strong.
For, distant as they are, on mortal man
The gods from their ethereal seats look down ;
And sober Wisdom scorns to own
The wily and presumptuous plan. 420
Pride, that extends her aims too high,
Soon sees her short-lived glories die ;
Nor the present blessings tastes,
Whilst to great designs she hastes :
Such to me man's state appears, 425
When Pride her structures vain on Madness rears.

STROPHE II.

Might I to Cyprus win my way,
Where Venus holds her reign ;
And round her sprightly train
The soul-subduing Loves disporting play ! 430
O that at Paphos I were laid,
Careless beneath some fragrant shade,

Where, from a hundred mouths, through meads,
 Which spring's eternal verdure know,
 His rich train the barbaric river leads, 435
 And, visiting the plants and flowers,
 Supplies the soft-descending showers !
 Or up Pieria's craggy brow
 Might I my footsteps bend,
 In whose enchanting soft retreats 440
 The Muses love to form their seats,
 Then to Olympus' hallow'd heights ascend !
 Place me, Bacchus, place me there,
 Smiling god of mystic pleasures,
 Where the Loves, the Graces where 445
 Tread in light fantastic measures ;
 There, 'midst thy hallow'd train inroll'd,
 Thy orgies will I hold.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The god, who, sprung from Jove's embrace,
 To joys the feast invites ; 450
 Him smiling Peace delights,
 Wealth-giving queen, that rears youth's rising race.
 To rich, to poor, to high, to low,
 Free his impartial bounties flow,
 The sorrow-soothing joys of wine : 455
 Nor pleasing night, nor mirthful day
 Is his, who sullen scorns the gift divine ;
 Whilst gloomy cares, and thoughts unblest'd,
 Roll darkening in his cheerless breast.
 But heavenly Wisdom's sober ray, 460
 Beaming its influence wide
 Benign her votaries to illume,
 Shows, as it breaks the impious gloom,
 The dangerous paths of violence and pride.
 But the vulgar, thoughtless herd, 465
 By *misguiding* Folly led,

Every false pursuit preferr'd,
 To destruction onward tread.
 Well it becomes our solemn strain
 This moral lore to explain. 470

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, OFFICER, CHORUS.

OFF. Thy presence, Pentheus, we approach, re-
 turn'd

Not unsuccessful from the chase by thee
 Enjoin'd: no savage we pursued, but tame
 He fled not, nor unwilling gave his hands;
 Nor from his warm cheek changed the roseate bloom
 Through fear, but smiling yielded to be bound, 476
 And hither led, obedient to my will.
 Through reverence this I said, 'Not willingly
 I lead thee, stranger, but by the commands
 Of Pentheus, sent by him.' The dames, O king, 480
 Seized by thee, and confined, with chains of iron
 Bound in the common prison, are escaped
 Far from thy sight, and to the hallow'd groves
 Win their free way: spontaneous from their feet
 The chains fell off, and of their own accord 485
 Back roll'd the opening gates, by mortal hands
 Untouch'd. With many marvellous powers this youth
 Is come to Thebes. My office is discharged.

PEN. Bind his hands fast: entangled in the toils,
 Light as he is of foot, he shall not 'scape me. 490
 Yet not ungraceful, stranger, is thy form
 Charming the women, and for this thou comest
 To Thebes: thy length of hair, palæstic toils
 Denoting not, flows loosely round thy cheek,
 Awakening soft desires; and that fair skin 495
 Of cherish'd whiteness never felt the touch
 Of the sun's beams; but, nursed in sheltering shades,
Aims with its beauty to enkindle love.

But speak, inform me first whence is thy race.

BAC. Without proud prelude plainly will I tell thee.
Of flowery Tmolus thou perchance hast heard. 501

PEN. Its heights, I know, wind round the walls of
Sardis.

BAC. From thence I come, and Lydia is my country.

PEN. Whence hast thou brought these mystic rites
to Greece?

BAC. Bacchus instructed us, the son of Jove. 505

PEN. Have you a Jove there who begets new gods?

BAC. No; but the Jove that here loved Semele.

PEN. Taught he his mystic lore by night or day?

BAC. Seeing and seen; and gave his sacred orgies.

PEN. What ceremonious rites have these among
you? 510

BAC. These to the unhallow'd may not be reveal'd.

PEN. What profit to their votaries do they bring?

BAC. Thou mayst not hear, though worthy to be
known.

PEN. Well hast thou waved what is my wish to hear.

BAC. The orgies of the god abhor the impious. 515

PEN. The god was seen by thee: what was his form?

BAC. Ev'n such as pleased him: this I order'd not.

PEN. This too thy art hath waved, and told me
naught.

BAC. To instruct the wise in wisdom argues weak-
ness.

PEN. Camest thou here first to introduce the god?

BAC. These orgies each barbaric region holds. 521

PEN. Less wise than the enlighten'd sons of Greece?

BAC. In this more wise, though differing in their
laws.

PEN. Hold you these rites by night, or in the day?

BAC. Chiefly by night; darkness creates an awe.

PEN. *This tempts and poisons female chastity.* 526

BAC. Ev'n in the day foul deeds are often found.

PEN. Thou must be punish'd for thy sophistry.

BAC. Thou for thy folly, impious 'gainst the god.

PEN. How bold is Bacchus, nor untrain'd in words!

BAC. What dreadful vengeance, say, wilt thou inflict?
531

PEN. First will I clip those wanton-waving locks.

BAC. These locks are sacred, cherish'd to the god.

PEN. Deliver up that thyrsus from thine hands. 534

BAC. Take it thou from me : as the god's I bear it.

PEN. Imprison'd and in chains will I secure thee.

BAC. The god himself will free me, when I please.

PEN. When thou invokest him 'midst his maddening
dames.

BAC. What now I suffer present he beholds. 539

PEN. Where is he ? for mine eyes discern him not.

BAC. With me : but thy profaneness clouds thy
sight.

PEN. Lay hold on him ; for Thebes and me he scorns.

BAC. I strictly charge your folly, bind me not.

PEN. I charge you bind him ; mine's the greater
power.

BAC. Nor life, nor light thou know'st, nor who thou
art. 545

PEN. Yes, I am Pentheus, sprung from royal blood.

BAC. Thy name is rightly ominous of grief.

PEN. Begone : in chains secure him near the stalls
Where feed my horses ; there in night's dark gloom
Let him abide ; there let him lead the dance. 550

As for these women, whom he led with him,

The associates of his crimes, they shall be sold ;

Or from the rattling cymbals will I check

Their hands, and at the loom keep them as slaves.

BAC. I will begone : for what necessity 555
Inflicts not, neither doth necessity

Compel to suffer. Bacchus, be assured,
 Whom thou hast set at naught, will on thy head
 Repay with vengeance these indignities :
 For, injuring me, thou lead'st the god in chains. 560

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O thou, of Achelous' race divine,
 Fairest of founts that lead
 Their crystal-flowing streams through grove or mead,
 Be every blessing, virgin Dirce, thine ;
 For in thy hallow'd wave 565

Oft joy'd the god his youthful limbs to lave.
 Snatch'd from the immortal lightning's blasting flame.
 The thunderer in his thigh inclosed the boy,

Then shouted loud through joy,
 ' There, Dithyrambus, there securely lie, 570
 Thy full growth to no female womb to owe ;
 Thus will I show thee, thus to Thebes will show,
 And Bacchus call thy name.'

But thou, bless'd Dirce, dost his rites deny :
 Why from thy crisp banks with disdain 575
 Reject my garland-bearing train ?

Why roll away with scorn thy flying tide ?
 Nay, by the purple grace that glows
 Clustering beneath the rich vine's boughs,
 Thy Bacchus shalt thou hail, thy boast, thy pride. 580

ANTISTROPHE.

What rage, what rage doth Pentheus' bosom fire ?

He from the dragon-brood,
 That started from the ground, derives his blood ;
 Earth-born Echion was of old his sire :

570 Dithyrambus was a name given to Bacchus, whence
 the hymns sung in honor of him were called Dithyrambics.

Terrific are his frowns ; 585
 A monster, whom humanity disowns ;
 As fierce, as savage as the giant-race
 That rear'd their impious arms against the sky.

Ah me ! I soon must lie,
 Seized and dragg'd hence, in some deep dungeon
 bound, 590

Though priestess of the god : in iron chains
 The leader of our choirs his pride detains,

Hid in some dreary place
 Where night with all its horrors darkens round.

Seest thou, O Bacchus, his rude hand ? 595

Seest thou thy consecrated band
 Forced in the unequal contest to engage ?

In all thy golden-glowing bloom
 Come from Olympus, Bacchus, come,
 Thy thyrsus shake, and check his savage rage ! 600

EPODE.

Where, Bacchus, dost thou now delight
 To lead thy hallow'd band ?
 On Nysa's savage-nursing height
 Shakest thou thine ivy wand ?
 Dost thou, god, thy orgies keep 605
 On Corycus' craggy steep ;
 Or the darksome lairs among

On high Olympus forest-waving head,
 Where Orpheus tuned his sounding shell,
 And, as the harmonious measures swell, 610
 The trees, the savage beasts he led

Attentive to the rapture-breathing song ?

Bless'd Pieria, through thy groves
 Now the god delighted roves,
 Soon to bring his dancing train, 615
 With his mystic revelry :

Soon to Lydia's favor'd plain
 As their nimble feet they ply,
 O'er Axius' stream his Mænades to guide ;
 Dispensing wealth and happiness around 620
 Prolific Axius rolls his lucid tide ;
 Sees his soft vales with verdant plenty crown'd ;
 And, as his current wins its mazy way,
 Joys in the sprightly steeds that on its margent play.

BACCHUS, CHORUS.

BAC. Evøe, my Bacchæ, ho ! Hear ye my voice ? 625
[within.]

My Bacchæ, ho ! my Bacchæ !

CHO.

Who is this ?

Who calls me ? Whence this voice, this Bacchic shout ?

BAC. Evøe ! Again I call, the son of Jove
 And Semele.

CHO.

It is his voice, our lord ;
 Evøe, come quickly to thy hallow'd band ! 630
 O Bacchus, Bacchus ! dreadfully the earth
 Beneath us rocks : the house of Pentheus soon
 Shall sink in the convulsion : in the house
 Is Bacchus : bow with reverence to the god.

SEMIC. We bow with reverence : see the marble
 frieze 635

Shakes on those pillars : Bacchus is within ;
 Soon will he raise his cheerful-sounding cry.

CHO. Kindle the ethereal lightning's blazing flame,
 Burn, burn the house of Pentheus.

SEMIC.

Look, look there ;

Seest thou that fire ? Around the sacred tomb 640
 Of Semele the lightning-flames of Jove,

616 Axius is mentioned by Pausanias as a river of Pæonia.

In which she perish'd, unextinguish'd blaze.
 Fall prostrate on the earth, ye trembling dames;
 Fall prostrate, for our king is in the house,
 The son of Jove, and shakes it to and fro. 645

BAC. Barbaric dames, astonished with your fears,
[coming forward]

Lie you thus prostrate? You perceive, I ween,
 That Bacchus from its firm foundations shakes
 The house of Pentheus: but arise, revive
 Your drooping spirits; banish all your fears. 650

CHO. Thou brightest glory of our Bacchic rites,
 With transport I behold thee 'midst this gloom
 Which closes round my cheerless solitude.

BAC. What, sunk you in despair when I was sent,
 As doom'd to lie in darkness and in chains? 655

CHO. What could I but despair? For who should be
 My guardian, if on thee misfortune fell?
 How art thou free from his unhallow'd hands?

BAC. With ease I freed myself; no work of toil. 659

CHO. Did not the tyrant bind thy hands in chains?

BAC. In that I sported with him: when he thought
 His chains to fasten on me, he nor bound
 Nor touch'd me, but was fed with empty hope.
 When he had dragg'd us to the stalls, to lie
 Imprison'd there, he found a bull, around 665
 His knees he fix'd the bonds, and his cleft hoofs,
 Breathless through rage, till streams of sweat flow'd
 down

His limbs, and in despite he gnaw'd his lip:
 Near him I sat, and quietly look'd on.
 But Bacchus meanwhile coming shook the house, 670
 And in his mother's tomb awoke the fire:

Soon as he saw it, thinking that his house

Was all in flames, his hurrying step he bent
Now this way, that way now, and call'd aloud

For water: every slave was occupied 675
 In the vain toil. Quitting his own attempt,
 For me he thought escaped, he drew his sword,
 And rush'd into the house; but Bacchus there
 (I speak what I surmise) framed in the court
 A form of lucid air; on this he flew, 680
 And smote the phantom, me as he would kill.
 Nor ended here the vengeance; for the god
 Rent from its solid base the shatter'd house,
 And all was crush'd in ruin whilst he view'd
 My cruel chains. Now wearied with his toil, 685
 He sheath'd his sword, vain mortal, 'gainst the god
 That dared to fight. I from their prison freed
 The Bacchæ, and of Pentheus reckless come
 To you. But to this portal will he haste:
 Methinks I hear the trampling of his feet. 690
 What will he say to this? But I will bear
 His pride with mildness, though he threaten high;
 For temperate anger well becomes the wise.

PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, CHORUS.

PEN. And must I brook these insults? From the
 chains
 In which I bound him is the stranger fled? 695
 Ha! there he stands: what may this mean? and how
 Darest thou appear abroad before my house?
 BAC. Stop thy foot there; stand there, and curb thy
 rage.
 PEN. How hast thou fled thy bonds? how art thou
 here?
 BAC. Did I not tell thee one would quickly free
 me?
 PEN. Who? for thy tongue still frames some new
 discourse. 701
 BAC. *He, who to mortals rear'd the clustering vine.*

PEN. This grace to Bacchus falsely hast thou charged.

BAC. Bar every gate of every tower around.

PEN. What! cannot then the gods o'erpass the walls?

BAC. O, thou art wise, save where it most behoves thee. 706

PEN. Where it behoves me most, I there am wise.

BAC. First listen to his words, and weigh them well,
Who from the mountains comes with tidings to thee.
We, be thou sure, will stay; we will not fly. 710

MESSENGER, PENTHEUS, BACCHUS, CHORUS.

MES. Pentheus, high sovereign of the Theban state,
Leaving Cithæron, on whose sacred head
The snow, that thaws not, whitens, I am come.

PEN. What are thy tidings? Aught of high import?

MES. I saw the madding dames that from this land,
To frenzy fired, rove with unsandal'd foot; 716
And I am come to tell thee, and the state,
What wondrous deeds, and more than marvellous,
They do. But I would know if I may speak
Of these with freedom, or with softer phrase 720
Must clothe the unwelcome tidings; for I fear
Thy hasty spirit, king, thy rigorous anger,
And all the monarch swelling in thy soul.

PEN. Speak freely; thou from me hast naught to fear;

Nor on the good shall my displeasure fall. 725
But the more dreadful are the deeds by thee
Related of these Bacchæ, with more weight
Shall my severest vengeance light on him,
Who to these arts allured our frantic dames.

MES. Now to the mountain summits had I led 730
My herds, as on the earth the orient sun
Shot his refreshing beams; when I beheld

Three bands of females, to Autonoe one
 Obedient, to Agave one, thy mother ;
 The third to Ino : all were laid asleep ; 735
 Beneath them some had spread the boughs of pines ;
 Some with the leaves of oaks form'd on the ground
 Their casual bed, all decently composed.
 Thou wouldst not say that goblets full of wine
 Inflamed their sense, or that the wanton pipe 740
 Had led them to the lonely shades to court
 The rites of Venus with their paramours.
 Thy mother, when the lowings of the herds
 Had reach'd her ears, arose, and 'midst her band
 Shouted aloud, to rouse them from their sleep : 745
 They from their balmy slumbers oped their eyes,
 And started up, but with that modesty
 'Twas wonderful to see, the young, the old,
 And the unmarried virgins. O'er their necks
 Their loose-devolving hair they spread, refix 750
 Their vestments, such whose cinctures were unloosed,
 And o'er them bind the spotted skins of fawns,
 With serpents wreathing round their shaded cheeks.
 Some holding in their arms a kid, and some
 The wolves' wild whelps, taught them to drain their
 breasts 755
 Swelling with milk, their new-born infants left
 At home ; then on their heads their garlands place
 Of oak, of ivy, and the silvery bloom
 Of smilax : one her thyrsus took, and smote
 The rock ; out gush'd the pure translucent stream : 760
 Another cast her light wand on the ground ;
 Instant (so will'd the god) a fount of wine
 Sprung forth : if any wish'd a softer draught,
 These with their fingers oped the ground, and milk
 Issued in copious streams : and from their spears 765
 With ivy wreathed the dulcet honey flow'd.

Hadst thou been present, thou wouldst not, as now,
 Revile the god ; but, seeing this, with vows
 Address him. All the herdsmen gather'd round,
 And all the shepherds, with dissentient voice 770
 To descant on these deeds, that struck their sense
 With dread and wonder. 'Midst us came a man
 Practised in city wiles, and train'd to gloze
 His hackney'd tongue, who thus bespoke us all :
 ' You, who the hallow'd mountain's pastoral tracts 775
 Inhabit, from her orgies shall we chase
 The royal dame Agave, to our king
 Doing a grace?' We thought he counsell'd well ;
 And, cover'd in the leafy thickets, took
 Our secret stations : at the appointed hour 780
 They shook the thyrsus to their revelry,
 And shouted Evoe Bacchus, son of Jove,
 With thickening clamors ; all the mountains danced
 To their wild revelry, with all its beasts,
 And nothing at their measures stood unmoved. 785
 Near me Agave chanced to bound along ;
 I, from the thicket where I stood conceal'd,
 Sprung forward with an eager wish to seize her :
 She cried aloud, ' Companions of my chase,
 We by these men are chased ; but follow me ; 790
 Follow, and with the thyrsus arm your hands.'
 We saved ourselves by flight, the Bacchæ else
 Had torn us piecemeal ; on the herds, that grazed
 The verdant slope, their hands unarm'd with steel,
 They rush'd ; a heifer lowing mightst thou see 795
 Held in the hands of one, and others rent
 The herds ; their limbs and cleft hoofs mightst thou
 see
 Hurl'd to and fro, and hanging on the pines
 Distain their green with blood : ev'n the fierce bulls,
Wont with their angry horns to threaten, fell, 800

Beneath a thousand hands of youthful females
 Dragg'd to the ground : asunder were they rent
 Ere thou couldst close thy royal eyelids down.
 Instant, like birds that wing their airy flight,
 They hurried to the extended plains below, 805
 Which, by Asopus water'd, yield to Thebes
 A plenteous harvest ; to Erythra's walls,
 And Hysia, fix'd beneath Cithæron's heights :
 On these with hostile rage they fell, and rent
 Whate'er they found, and toss'd it scatter'd wide ; 810
 And ev'n their children from their houses snatch'd.
 Whate'er was on their shoulders placed, remain'd
 Fix'd, though not bound, and fell not to the earth,
 Were it or brass or iron : in their hair
 They carried fire, yet were their locks not burnt. 815
 Those, who were plunder'd by these madding dames,
 Flew in their rage to arms ; then mightst thou see
 A sight, O king ! had struck thee with amaze ;
 Unstain'd with blood their iron-pointed spears
 Fell harmless, whilst each thyrsus gored with wounds :
 Dismay ensued, and flight, by female hands 821
 Men vanquish'd, not without some god. And now
 Back to the heights, which they had left, they wing'd
 Their way, and to the fountains which the god
 Had open'd for them, and wash'd off the blood, 825
 Whilst from their cheeks the serpent's cleansing tongue
 Lick'd the warm drop. Therefore receive, O king !
 This god, whoe'er he be, into the city ;
 For, powerful as he is, his bounty gave
 (So fame reports) the sorrow-ceasing vine 830
 To men : where wine is wanting, love soon flies ;
 Nothing so bathes the spirits in delight.
 CHO. The words of freedom to a tyrant's ear
 I dread to utter, yet they shall be utter'd :
This Bacchus is inferior to no god. 835

PEN. These insults of the Bacchæ, like a flame,
 Are kindled near us, a reproach to Greece.
 This is no time for slow delay ; with speed
 Fly to the Electran gates ; bid all that bear
 The massy shield, that mount the rapid steed, 840
 That toss the light targe, and the stringed bow
 Grasp in their hands, attend me ; I will lead them
 Against these Bacchæ. No, it is too much,
 From women to endure this insolence.

BAC. What I have told thee, Pentheus, hath not
 power 845
 To move thee ; but, though thy rude rage hath fallen
 On me with rigorous vengeance, I will say
 Ill it becomes thee thus to rise in arms
 Against the god : rest thou in quiet then ;
 For Bacchus will not suffer thee to drive 850
 His females from their orgie-sounding heights.

PEN. Thou shalt not check me : though from bonds
 escaped,
 Take heed, or thou again shalt feel my vengeance.

BAC. I rather would adore him, than in rage
 Spurn at his power, a mortal 'gainst a god. 855

PEN. These females from Cithæron's craggy steep
 Will I dislodge, and spread the carnage wide.

BAC. You all will fly ; this foul disgrace awaits
 you,
 Smote by the thyrsus of the Bacchic dames,
 To cast the brazen-plated shields away. 860

PEN. This stranger is intractable, and gives
 Endless disquiet, nor in suffering rests,
 Nor acting.

BAC. Yet might this be well composed.

PEN. What should I do ? be to my slaves a slave ?

BAC. I without arms will bring these females hi-
 ther. 865

PEN. This is some secret treachery plann'd against me.

BAC. What treachery, if I wish my arts should save thee?

PEN. A common compact this, to revel still.

BAC. I own my compact, namely, with the god.

PEN. Bring me my arms; and thou forbear thy speech. 870

BAC. Close seated on the mountains wouldst thou see them?

PEN. I wish it, and would give vast sums of gold.

BAC. And what excites thee to this ardent wish?

PEN. I long to see them when inflamed with wine.

BAC. Wouldst thou with pleasure see what would offend thee? 875

PEN. Hid by the pines, in silence will I look.

BAC. But they will trace thee to thy secret stand.

PEN. Then open let it be: well hast thou said.

BAC. I am thy guide: thou shalt attempt the way.

PEN. Guide me this instant, and command my time.

BAC. In linen vestments then array thyself. 881

PEN. Why to the semblance of a woman changed?

BAC. Lest, if discovered as a man, they kill thee.

PEN. This is well judged; I now shall deem thee wise.

BAC. We this monition were by Bacchus taught. 885

PEN. How then shall thy device be put in act?

BAC. Enter thy house; there will I rightly dress thee.

PEN. How dress me? like a woman? shame forbids.

BAC. Wish then no more to see the Mænades.

PEN. What is the dress in which thou wouldst attire me? 890

BAC. First, from thy head a length of hair shall flow.

PEN. And with what ornaments array me next?

BAC. Long flowing robes, a mitre on thy head.

PEN. To this attire hast thou aught else to add ?

BAC. A thyrsus, and a young hind's dappled skin.

PEN. I could not bear this womanish attire. 896

BAC. Yet wouldst thou spread the carnage wide in fight.

PEN. Well: let me view them first, myself unseen.

BAC. 'Tis wiser thus, than to hunt ills with ills. 899

PEN. How through the city shall I pass unknown ?

BAC. Through unfrequented passes: I will guide thee.

PEN. Let come what will rather than bear their scoffs.

BAC. Within consult we what behoves us do ;
Ev'n what thou wilt ; thy honor be my charge.

PEN. I will attend thee ; go with thee in arms, 905
Or to thy counsels frame my yielding will.

BACCHUS, CHORUS.

BAC. Yes, to the Bacchæ shall he go, and there
Perish beneath their vengeance: as a mark
He stands, ye females, to our shafts exposed.
Now, Bacchus, comes thy part ; nor distant thou: 910
Avenge us on him ; of his senses first
Deprive him, with light madness strike his soul:
For never in his senses would he wear
This female dress: strike him with madness then,
That he may put it on. I owe him this, 915
To show him in this womanish attire
A jest to Thebes, for all those threats which late
He fiercely utter'd. But I haste to fit

897 Bacchus here repeats the words of Pentheus, l. 857, but in a different sense; Pentheus intended the slaughter of the Bacchæ, Bacchus of Pentheus: we meet with many instances of this concealed meaning.

This dress for Pentheus, clothed in which he goes
 To death's dark realms, slain by his mother's hands;
 And he shall know that Bacchus, son of Jove, 921
 His rites asserting, is indeed a god
 Most dreadful, gentle else, and mild to men.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

When shall I in midnight dance
 Light my snowy foot advance? 925
 When, my swelling bosom bare,
 Fling it to the dewy air?
 Like the sportive hind, that treads
 The rich luxuriance of the verdant meads,
 When the dreadful chase she flies, 930
 O'er the close nets nimbly bounds,
 Hears no more the hunters' cries
 Cheer the swift-pursuing hounds:
 With the wing'd wind's rapid speed
 From all her toils, from all her dangers freed, 935
 Careless she roves the watery glades,
 Joys in the lonely wilds and dark embowering shades.
 Do Heaven's rich stores, does Wisdom know
 A mead more glorious, than with conquering hand
 To grasp the proud head of a foe? 940
 Raptures still rise where Glory takes her stand.

ANTISTROPHE.

Slow it comes, but holds its course
 Awful with unfailing force,
 On the wretch, who rites divine
 Pays at Vice's impure shrine; 945
 Who with pride the gods defies:
 Faithful to pour the vengeance of the skies,
 They the lingering foot of time
 Oft conceal from mortal view;

But the bold unholy crime 950

Still its silent steps pursue.

Deem then, just to Virtue's cause,

Naught more revered, more sacred than the laws ;

And learn each power of Heaven to own ;

For right and ancient law have fix'd their steadfast
throne. 955

Do Heav'n's rich stores, does Wisdom know

A meed more glorious, than with conquering hand

To grasp the proud head of a foe ?

Raptures still rise where Glory takes her stand.

EPODE.

Bless'd is the man, who, 'scaped the stormy seas, 960

The welcome harbor gains :

And bless'd is he, who, now at ease,

Sees with success his weary labors crown'd.

But, 'midst the various blessings round,

One greater wealth, one higher power obtains : 965

Yet to the myriads, which man's life supplies,

Myriads of hopes gay-smiling rise ;

Some fruitless fade away,

Some to perfection each fair blossom raise.

His happiness I praise, 970

Whose life with blessings cheers each joyful day.

BACCHUS, PENTHEUS, CHORUS.

BAC. Thou, who wouldst see what to thy curious eye

Is not permitted ; thou, who wouldst attempt

Things not to be attempted, Pentheus, ho !

To thee I call ; come forth ; appear in sight, 975

In female vestments, like the Mænades :

Accoutred on thy mother and her train

To be a spy, thy graceful figure show :

A daughter sure of Cadmus meets our eye.

PEN. Methinks I see two suns, a double Thebes, 980

And its seven gates rise double to my sight.
 A bull thou seem'st to lead us, on thy head
 Thou bearest horns. Art thou indeed a beast?
 Thou hast the semblance of a beast. The god,
 Before not friendly, goes with us along. 985

BAC. He is confederate with us: now thou seest
 What thou shouldst see.

PEN. What figure do I make?
 Have I not Ino's or Agave's air?

BAC. So like, methinks I see them, seeing thee.
 But this loose lock is started from its place, 990
 Nor as beneath thy mitre I composed it.

PEN. Tossing my head, and rolling it within,
 Acting these Bacchic motions, I displaced it.

BAC. But we, whose care it is to deck thee forth,
 Will soon adjust it: upright bear thy head. 995

PEN. See that thou dress me right; I trust to thee.

BAC. Thy zone is loose, and these contracting folds
 Let not thy robes flow seemly to thy feet.

PEN. At my right foot they seem so; but at this
 They fall in decent order to my ancles. 1000

BAC. Wilt thou not hold me dear, when thou shalt see,
 Beyond thy warmest hopes, the modest Bacchæ?

PEN. To appear like one of them, how should I bear
 The thyrsus—in my right hand, or in this?

BAC. In thy right hand, and with thy right foot
 raise it. 1005

This change of resolution I commend.

PEN. What! may I bear Cithæron's heights, and all
 The Bacchæ with them, on my shoulders raised?

BAC. Ay, if thou wilt, thou mayst: thy sense, be-
 fore

Disorder'd, now is such as well becomes thee. 1010

PEN. Bear we then massy bars, or with my hands
 Uprooted shall I place beneath its heights

My shoulders, or support them in my arms?

BAC. Nay, it were pity to destroy these haunts
Where the nymphs love to sport; the favorite seats
Of Pan, where oft he breathes his rural reeds. 1016

PEN. Well hast thou said: these females will not be
By force subdued; I 'll hide me 'mongst the firs.

BAC. Hide thee? Ay, hide thee where thou ought'st
to hide,

A fraudulent spy upon the Mænades. 1020

PEN. They may be caught, I ween, amidst the
thickets,

Like birds, in those delightful haunts that nest.

BAC. And therefore wouldst thou watch them: thou
perchance

Mayst catch them too, unless thou first art caught.

PEN. Conduct me through the midst of Thebes;
alone, 1025

Of all her sons, I dare attempt this deed.

BAC. Alone thou laborest for this state, alone;

Therefore a meed awaits thee, as is fit.

I will conduct thee safe; to bring thee back

Shall be another's office.

PEN. What, my mother's? 1030

BAC. To all conspicuous.

PEN. And for that I go.

BAC. Thou shalt come carried back.

PEN. Thy words import
My delicacy.

BAC. In thy mother's arms.

PEN. Will she constrain me to this daintiness?

BAC. Such dainties.

PEN. Such as I deserve I court. 1035

BAC. Ruthless thou art, and ruthless art thou gone
To ruthless sufferings: therefore shalt thou find
A glory firmly 'stablish'd in the skies.

Stretch forth thy hands, Agave, with thy sisters,
 Daughters of Cadmus : see, I bring this youth 1040
 To this great contest : I shall be victorious,
 And Bacchus : but the event will show the rest.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Go, ye fleet dogs of Madness, go,
 Sweep o'er the mountain's rugged brow,
 Where sport the dames of Cadmus' royal race : 1045
 Inflame their frantic fury high
 To hold this female-vested wretch in chase,
 Who madly dares their hallow'd haunts espy.
 Him from Cithæron's rocky head,
 Or some inclosure's rising mound, 1050
 His mother first shall view in ambush laid,
 Then shouting call the Mænades around :—
 ' These heights, these heights, ye Bacchæ, who
 Ascends, our mountain-ranging train to view ?
 Whence is his lineage traced ? 1055
 His birth he to no woman owes ;
 But from some tigress in the howling waste,
 Or Libyan Gorgon rose.'
 Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad, appear ;
 High thy thundering falchion rear ; 1060
 Stain it in his unrighteous, impious gore,
 And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

ANTISTROPHE.

He with unjust, nefarious thought,
 And with unholy madness fraught,
 Against thy orgies, Bacchus, dares to fight, 1065
 Against his mother's hallow'd train,
 By force to conquer thy unconquer'd might,
 Swoln with obdurate pride and malice vain.

With peace their cloudless days shall shine,
 Who wisdom's temperate power obey : 1070
 But death on him, that spurns at rites divine,
 Comes undisguised, and rushes on his prey.

With joy I see their greatness rise,
 And envy not when Glory crowns the wise ;
 In honor train'd their lives 1075

By day, by night the gods adore :
 But lawless is his rage, who madly strives
 To insult their slighted power.
 Vengeance, in all thy terrors clad, appear ;
 High thy thundering falchion rear ; 1080
 Stain it in unrighteous, impious gore,
 And ruin on this earth-born tyrant pour.

EPODE.

His sense, O son of Jove! confound ;
 A bull to his astonish'd eyes appear ;
 Or as a dragon rear 1085
 A hundred threatening heads ; or to his sight,
 A lion breathing flames around,
 His guilty soul affright.
 Go, hunter god, pursue the chase,
 Whilst the smile brightens on thy face : 1090
 Go, hunter god, thy Bacchæ lead ;
 Their unabating, fatal speed
 Shall seize the savage as he flies,
 And triumph o'er their trembling prize.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O house, illustrious once through Greece, thou
 house 1095
 Of the old Sidonian chief, who sow'd in the earth
 The dragon harvest of the serpent's seed,
How I lament thee, though a slave ; yet slaves,

If faithful, mourn the ruin of their lords.

CHO. What tidings bear'st thou? from the Bacchæ
ought? 1100

MES. Pentheus is dead, earth-born Echion's son.

CHO. O sovereign Bacchus, thou art found a god!

MES. What say'st thou, woman? what import thy
words?

Dost thou then glory in my lord's ill fate?

CHO. A stranger, in barbaric strains I hymn 1105
The god, nor longer dread the threaten'd chains.

MES. Is there no manly spirit left in Thebes?

CHO. O'er me not Thebes, but Bacchus hath com-
mand.

MES. So far thou mayst be pardon'd; but to joy
In evils suffer'd, that becomes you not. 1110

CHO. But tell me how he perish'd; by what death,
The ruthless man, devising ruthless deeds.

MES. Soon as we left Therapnæ, to our Thebes
Adjacent, and had pass'd Asopus' stream,
We mount Cithæron's steep, Pentheus, myself, 1115
(I on my lord attended,) and our guide,

The stranger: to the forest first we came,
And trod with silent step the grassy ground,
Nor breathed a whisper; for we went to see,
Not to be seen. A hollow glen was here; 1120

On each side crags arose, and through the midst,
With pine-trees shaded round, a streamlet flow'd.
There sat the Mænades, their hands employ'd
In grateful tasks: around the thyrsus some,
Deserted of its foliage, wreathed afresh 1125

The ivy twine; some, from the various heights
Like hinds descending, with melodious voice
Respondent each to each the sprightly song
To Bacchus raised. The unhappy Pentheus here,
The female band not seeing, thus bespoke 1130

The stranger :—‘ Where I stand, my searching eye
 Descries not their employ ; let me ascend
 Some pine that waves his tall top o’er you mound,
 Thence might I view distinct their shameful deeds.’
 There with amaze a wondrous act I saw : 1135
 A pine’s aerial branch the stranger took,
 And downward drew it ; drew it to the ground ;
 Till, as one bends a bow, or curves the line
 That marks the rolling wheel’s circumference,
 The stranger with his hands the mountain pine 1140
 Drew down, and bent it to the earth ; a deed
 Exceeding mortal strength : amidst the boughs
 He seated Pentheus, to its upright state
 Then let the branch with gentle motion rise,
 Lest the too quick and violent recoil 1145
 Should toss him from his hold : and now the tree
 Stood firm its upright height, and bore my lord,
 Seen by the Bacchæ, more than seeing them,
 As more conspicuous in his lofty seat.
 And now the stranger was no more beheld ; 1150
 But from the ethereal height a voice was heard,
 Of Bacchus, it should seem, calling aloud,—
 ‘ Ye blooming females, him I bring, who held
 Your train, and me, and my mysterious rites
 In proud derision : pour your vengeance on him.’ 1155
 He spoke, and to the sky, and to the earth
 Display’d a steady blaze of sacred light.
 The air was hush’d ; through all the pastured grove,
 And all its leaves, a solemn silence reign’d, 1159
 Nor sound of beast was heard : the Theban dames,
 The voice not heard distinct, start from their seats,
 And roll their eyes around : again he gave
 The dread command : but when they clearly knew
The bidding of the god, with rapid speed,
Swift as the flight of doves, they forward rush’d, 1165

Agave, and the dames of royal blood,
 And all the Bacchæ : with the god inspired
 They bounded o'er the torrent of the grove,
 And up the crags ; but when my lord they saw
 High seated on the pine, they mount a cliff 1170
 Full opposite, and at his head first hurl
 What of the rock their hands could grasp : and some
 The broken branches of a pine-tree dart ;
 Others aloft at his uneasy seat
 The thyrsus cast, but reach'd him not, the height 1175
 Beyond their aim, where my unhappy lord
 Astonied sat, nor had what to devise.
 And now the boughs of oaks, and their tough roots
 Rent from the ground, (nor wanted they for this
 Poles arm'd with iron,) in a volley'd storm 1180
 They hurl'd : but when Agave saw their toils
 Wasted in vain, she cried, ' Haste, form a ring,
 And grasp the stem around, that we may seize
 This mounted savage : let him not divulge
 The secret orgies of the god.' At once 1185
 A thousand hands were to the pine applied,
 And instant from the ground uprooted it :
 Pentheus, high seated, with it from his height
 Came headlong to the earth, with many a groan,
 For mischief now he saw was nigh at hand. 1190
 Agave, as the priestess of the rites,
 Began the murderous work, and rushes on him :
 The mitre from his hair he rent, that, known,
 His mother might not kill him ; on her cheek
 He placed his soothing hand, and suppliant said,—
 ' 'Tis Pentheus, O my mother ! 'tis thy son, 1196
 Thine and Echion's son, who sues to thee :
 Have pity on me, mother ; do not kill
 Thy son for his offence.' She foam'd with rage,
 Rolling her eyes askance, nor harbor'd thoughts 1200

She ought to harbor, frantic with the god,
 Nor listen'd to his prayers ; but his left hand
 She seized, and pressing on his side, tore off
 His shoulder, with a force not hers, the deed
 Made easy by the god. On the other side 1205
 Ino assisted in the dreadful work,
 Rending his flesh : Autonoe hung upon him,
 And all the Bacchæ : every voice was raised
 At once ; his dying breath was spent in groans.
 They shouted wild : one snatch'd an arm, and one
 A sandal'd foot : dismember'd by their force 1211
 Lay the bare trunk ; in their ensanguined hands
 Each hurl'd the flesh of Pentheus to and fro :
 His limbs were scatter'd ; on the craggy rocks
 Some, on the close-entwined thickets some, 1215
 No easy search : the miserable head
 His mother, as she caught it in her hands,
 Fix'd on her thyrsus ; o'er Cithæron bears
 High lifted, as some mountain lion's spoils.
 Leaving her sisters with the Mænades, 1220
 And proud of her ill-fated prize, her steps
 She this way bends, on Bacchus calling loud,
 The partner of the chase and of the prize,
 The glorious conqueror, who this conquest gain'd
 Of tears to her. This horrid scene I fled, 1225
 Ere to this house Agave should return.
 A modest awe and reverence of the gods
 I deem the most distinguish'd ornament,
 And wisdom's noblest height in mortal man.

CHORUS.

To Bacchus raise the choral strain, 1230
 And celebrate the god for Pentheus slain.
 This tyrant of the dragon race,
 Our hallow'd haunts to trace,

Conceal'd a female stole beneath,
 The thyrsus shook with impious pride, 1235
 The faithful wand of death;
 And on his ruin rush'd, a bull his guide.
 Ye Theban dames, to Bacchus dear,
 Your god hath led the vaunting foe.
 His hopes of conquest vanish'd into air, 1240
 To groans, to tears, to wo.
 A glorious conquest, when her hand
 With her son's gushing blood distain'd
 The mother raised! —————
 No more: I see her: to this royal house 1245
 Agave speeds, rolling her furious eyes
 Askance. Receive the associate of the god.

AGAVE, CHORUS.

AGA. Ye Asiatic Bacchæ——
 CHO. Why that call?
 AGA. We from the mountains bring a new-slain
 prize,
 A glorious capture, to this royal house. 1250
 CHO. I see it, and receive thee to our band.
 AGA. I caught him without toils, without a troop
 Of hunters, this young lion: thou mayst see him.
 CHO. In what lone wild?
 AGA. Cithæron.
 CHO. Of Cithæron
 What?
 AGA. Kill'd him.
 CHO. But whose hand first wounded him?
 AGA. 'Tis mine, it is my prize.
 CHO. Happy Agave! 1256
 AGA. My name amidst the Bacchic train is famed:
 What other dame from Cadmus——
 CHO. What of Cadmus?

AGA. Who, sprung from Cadmus, save myself, myself,
 Once touch'd this savage ? 1259

CHO. Happy in thy prize !

AGA. Share then the feast.

CHO. Alas ! what should I share ?

AGA. 'Tis but a whelp : beneath his shaggy head
 The hair yet soft begins to clothe his cheeks :
 This brinded mane is the rough grace, that marks
 The mountain savage. Bacchus to this chase, 1265
 The hunter Bacchus, roused the Mænades,
 Showing his skill.

CHO. The chase delights our king.

AGA. Thou dost commend him.

CHO. What do I commend ?

AGA. The Thebans soon, and Pentheus too, my son,
 Shall praise his mother, who this glorious prize 1270
 Took gloriously, this lion-gender'd prize.

CHO. Dost thou exult ?

AGA. I joy, I joy in deeds
 So great, so glorious, by my hand perform'd.

CHO. Show then, unhappy, to thy citizens,
 Show the proud conquest thou hast brought with thee.

AGA. You, who the beauteous-structured towers of
 Thebes 1276

Inhabit, come, daughters of Cadmus, come,
 And see this prize, this savage, which I caught
 Not grasping the Thessalian spear, nor round
 Spreading the toils ; but with these vigorous arms
 Of snowy whiteness : this I make my boast, 1281
 And the fine artist forms the spear in vain ;
 For with these hands I caught him ; with these hands
 I rent the bleeding savage limb from limb.

Where is my aged father ? let him come : 1285

Where is my son, my Pentheus ? He will fix

High on the sculptured pillar, that supports
 The fretted roof, this head, the lion's spoils
 Which in the chase I caught, and bring with me.

CADMUS, AGAVE, CHORUS.

CAD. Follow me, you that bear the wretched load
 Of Pentheus ; my attendants, follow me ; 1291

For to the house I bear his body, found
 With toilsome search along Cithæron's heights
 Rent piecemeal, and the members scatter'd wide,
 With pain collected in the mazy wood : 1295

For as the gates I enter'd with the seer,
 Hoary Tiresias, of the daring deeds
 Wrought by my daughters in their Bacchic rage
 I heard ; and back returning to the heights
 I bring my son, slain by the Mænades. 1300

The mother of Actæon there I saw,
 Autonoe, with Ino at her side,
 Roving with frantic speed the tangled wilds :
 One there inform'd me that Agave bent
 This way her Bacchic foot ; he told me truth : 1305
 I see her here, her look betokening mischief.

AGA. My father, I may justly boast to thee,
 That thou hast daughters, who in worth excel
 All of their sex : this praise belongs to all,
 But most to me, who left the embroider'd web 1310
 For deeds of higher enterprise, to chase
 The mountain savage ; and this glorious prize,
 See, in mine arms I bring, which, hung on high,
 May grace thy house : my father, in thy hands
 Receive them ; glorying in my well-earn'd spoils, 1315
 Invite thy friends, and spread the joyful feast :
 For thou art bless'd, in our achievements bless'd.

CAD. Unmeasurable grief ! This is a sight
 Not to be borne,—this murder by your hands

Committed. To the gods dost thou present 1320
 A goodly victim, to the festive board
 Inviting Thebes and me. Thy miseries first
 I wail, and then mine own. The royal Bacchus
 With justice hath undone us, but severe
 In vengeance, as from hence he draws his birth. 1325

AGA. How wayward is old age, of aspect sour,
 To all around morose! May my son be
 Successful in the chase, and imitate
 His mother's manners, 'midst the Theban youth
 When ardent he pursues the savage beast! 1330
 But he alone dares fight against the god:
 He must be warn'd of this by thee, my father,
 And me, nor pride him in pernicious wisdom.
 Where is he? To my presence who will call him,
 That he may see me happy in my prize? 1335

CAD. Ah me! When you shall know what you
 have done,
 How wretched will you be! Should you remain
 Always as now, though far from happiness,
 Yet will you be insensible of ill. 1339

AGA. What is not glorious, what is mournful here?

CAD. To yon ethereal height first raise thine eyes.

AGA. I do; and there what am I to behold?

CAD. Seems it the same, or to receive a change?

AGA. Brighter it seems, and clearer than before.

CAD. Hangs the same wild amazement on thy soul?

AGA. I know not, but I feel my sense return'd, 1346
 And each conception of my mind is changed.

CAD. Wilt thou then hear, and coolly answer me?

AGA. All memory of my former words is lost. 1349

CAD. What house received thee with connubial rites?

AGA. Thou gavest me to the dragon-sprung Echion.

CAD. What son then to thy husband didst thou
 bear?

AGA. Pentheus, the offspring of our mutual love.

CAD. Whose is that head thou graspest in thine arms?

AGA. A lion's, as the female hunters said. 1366

CAD. Look at it, small the labor, view it well.

AGA. What do I see? What bear I in my hands?

CAD. Look with attention at it; know it clearly.

AGA. I see the greatest grief: unhappy me!

CAD. Appears it to thee like a lion's head? 1370

AGA. No; but I hold, ah me! the head of Pentheus.

CAD. Lamented, ere thy sense distinguish'd it.

AGA. Who slew him? And how came it in my hands?

CAD. Unhappy truth! ah, how unwelcome art thou!

AGA. Tell me: my anguish'd heart already throbs.

CAD. By thee and by thy sisters was he slain. 1366

AGA. Where died he? in the house? or in what place?

CAD. Where 'midst his clamorous hounds Actæon fell.

AGA. Why to Cithæron went my wretched son?

CAD. To insult thy orgies, and the god, he went.

AGA. What to those craggy heights could urge our steps? 1371

CAD. Madness; and all the frantic city raved.

AGA. Too late I see it, Bacchus hath undone us.

CAD. Reviled and wrong'd, you deem'd him not a god.

AGA. Where is the much-loved body of my son?

CAD. With pain I found it in the wilds, and bring it. 1376

AGA. Are the parts well united? On my son
How great a portion of my madness fell!

CAD. He was like you, and revered not the god,

Who therefore bound us all in the same chain 1380
 Of ruin, him, and you, to desolate
 The house, and me, who, destitute of sons,
 Behold this manly branch, which sprung from thee,
 Murder'd most vilely, and most shamefully,
 To whom all look'd with reverence. Thou, my child,
 My daughter's son, didst in my house bear rule, 1386
 And awe the city : none to my hoar hairs
 Dared offer violence, beholding thee ;
 Thy vengeance had chastised him : from my house
 Disgraced, an outcast shall I now be driven, 1390
 The mighty Cadmus, who the Theban race
 Sow'd in the ground, and reap'd the glorious harvest.
 Dearest of men ! for thou, though now no more,
 Shalt yet be number'd 'mongst my best-loved sons ;
 No more thy hand shall stroke this beard, no more
 Embrace thy mother's father, nor thy voice 1396
 Address me thus : ' Who wrongs thy reverend age ?
 Who dares dishonor thee ? who wrings thy heart
 With rude offence ? Inform me, and this hand
 Shall punish him that injures thee, my father.' 1400
 But now I am afflicted, wretched thou !
 Thy mother sinks beneath her misery,
 And her unhappy sisters. If there be
 A man, whose impious pride contemns the gods,
 Let him behold his death, and own their power. 1405
 CHO. Cadmus, we grieve for thee : thy daughter's
 son
 Hath his reward, just, though it pains thy heart.
 BAC. O father, (for my state now changed thou
 seest,)
 Thou and thy loved Harmonia (who from Mars
 Descended, graced thy bed, though mortal thou,) 1410
 Shall wear a dragon's savage form. With her,
 (For so the oracle of Jove declares,)

Toils after toils revolving shalt thou bear,
 Leading barbarians ; and with forces vast
 Level great towns and many to the ground : 1415
 But when the shrine of Phœbus their rude hands
 Shall plunder, intercepting their return,
 Misfortune shall await them : thee shall Mars
 Deliver and Harmonia from the ruin,
 And place you in the regions of the bless'd. 1420
 This, from no mortal father, but from Jove
 Descended, Bacchus tells thee : had you known
 What Prudence is, (but you would none of her,)
 You might have flourish'd in a prosperous state,
 Bless'd with the alliance of the son of Jove. 1425

CAD. We have offended ; we entreat forgiveness.

BAC. Too late you learn : you would not when you
 ought.

CAD. We own it ; yet thy vengeance is severe.

BAC. Though born a god, I was insulted by you.

CAD. Ill suits the gods frail man's relentless
 wrath. 1430

BAC. Long since my father Jove thus graced his son.

AGA. Ah me ! it is decreed, unhappy exile.

CAD. Alas, my daughter, in what dreadful ills
 Are we all plunged, thy sisters, and thyself
 Unhappy ! I shall bear my wretched age 1435
 To sojourn with barbarians, fated yet
 To lead a mix'd-barbaric host to Greece.
 Harmonia too, my wife, the child of Mars,
 Changed to a dragon's savage form, myself
 A dragon, to the altars, to the tombs 1440
 Of Greece, a chief with many a ported spear
 Shall I lead back ; and never shall my toils
 Know respite ; never shall I pass the stream
 Of Acheron below, and there find rest.

AGA. Hence, rest of thee, my father, will I fly. 1445

CAD. Why, my unhappy daughter, on my hand
Thus dost thou hang, as if the silver swan
Should fly for refuge to the useless drone?

AGA. A wretched outcast, which way shall I fly?

CAD. I know not, child: small aid thy father
gives. 1450

AGA. Farewell, my royal mansion; and farewell,
Thou city of my fathers; I will leave thee,
Through grief an exile from my nuptial bed.

CAD. Go now, my child, to Aristæus go.

AGA. I am bereaved of thee, my father.

CAD. Thine, 1455

My daughter, and thy sisters' woes I wail.

AGA. Severely, most severe hath the god
Brought on thy house this dreadful punishment.

CAD. Dreadful through you my sufferings; every
tongue

Shall sound my name with infamy in Thebes. 1460

AGA. Farewell, my father.

CAD. My unhappy child,

Thou too, farewell, if aught can now be well.

AGA. Lead, my attendants, lead me to my sisters,
That I may take them with me, of my flight

Mournful associates. Thither will I go, 1465

Where no Cithæron is polluted, where

These eyes may never see Cithæron more,
And where no thyrsus wakes uneasy thought.

To other Bacchic dames I leave these rites. 1469

CHO. With various hand the gods dispense our fates;

Now showering various blessings, which our hopes

Dared not aspire to; now controlling ills

We deem'd inevitable: thus the god

To these hath given an end exceeding thought:

Such is the fortune of this awful day. 1475

*1454 That is, to Thessaly, where Aristæus fed the sheep of
the Muses. He was the husband of Autonoe.*

I O N.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MERCURY.

ION.

CREUSA.

XUTHUS.

TUTOR.

ATTENDANT.

PRIESTESS of Apollo.

MINERVA.

CHORUS of Athenian dames.

I O N.

ARGUMENT.

CREUSA, the daughter of Erectheus, king of Athens, is beloved by Apollo, to whom she secretly bears a son, named Ion. Fearing the resentment of her father, she conveys the infant to a cave; and, after placing him in a cradle, with ornaments appended to his neck, leaves him: he is soon after carried by Mercury, at the desire of Apollo, to the shrine at Delphi: here his helpless condition excites the pity of the priestess, and he is admitted into the temple, where he is carefully instructed in the oracles of the deity. In the mean time, Creusa, by the command of her father, bestows her hand on Xuthus, the son of Æolus; and their mutual desire of children remaining long ungratified, they resolve to visit Delphi, where the oracle informs Xuthus that Ion is his son. Supposing that this youth is the fruit of an amour previous to his marriage with the princess, the happy Xuthus prepares a joyful festival, from which he himself is compelled to be absent, in order to present a grateful sacrifice to Apollo. Creusa, who is envious at the good fortune of her husband, commissions a slave to poison the young man at the banquet: the conspiracy is detected, and the assassin compelled to plead the orders of his mistress in extenuation of his guilt. Creusa, being thus clearly convicted of the offence, escapes to the temple for refuge, whither she is pursued by Ion, who is prevented from pursuing his revenge by the priestess who had formerly preserved his life, and who now delivers to his custody the ornaments which were found with the infant at the period of his exposure: by these Creusa recognises her son, whose divine race and future renown is announced by the goddess Minerva; while the attachment of Xuthus to his

wife continues uninterrupted, from his ignorance of the information thus communicated.—[The scene of this play lies before the temple of Apollo at Delphi.]

MERCURY.

ATLAS, that on his brazen shoulders rolls
 Yon heaven, the ancient mansion of the gods,
 Was by a goddess sire to Maia ; she
 To supreme Jove bore me, and call'd me Hermes ;
 Attendant on the king, his high behests 5
 I execute. To Delphi am I come,
 This land where Phœbus from his central throne
 Utters to mortals his high strain, declaring
 The present and the future ; this the cause ;
 Greece hath a city of distinguish'd glory, 10
 Which from the goddess of the golden lance
 Received its name ; Erectheus was its king ;
 His daughter, call'd Creusa, to the embrace
 Of nuptial love Apollo strain'd perforce,
 Where northward points the rock beneath the heights
 Crown'd with the Athenian citadel of Pallas, 16
 Call'd Macrai by the lords of Attica.
 Her growing burden, to her sire unknown,
 (Such was the pleasure of the god,) she bore,
 Till in her secret chamber to a son 20
 The rolling months gave birth : to the same cave,
 Where by the enanour'd god she was compress'd,
 Creusa bore the infant ; there for death
 Exposed him in a well-compacted ark
 Of circular form, observant of the customs 25
 Drawn from her great progenitors, and chief
 From Ericthonius, who from the Attic earth

11 *Minerva* was the guardian deity of *Athens*.

Derived his origin: to him as guards
 Minerva gave two dragons, and in charge
 Consign'd him to the daughters of Aglauros: 30
 This rite to the Erechthidæ hence remains,
 'Midst serpents wreathed in ductile gold to nurse
 Their children. What of ornament she had,
 She hung around her son, and left him thus
 To perish. But to me his earnest prayer 35
 Phœbus applied, ' To the high-lineaged sons
 Of glorious Athens go, my brother: well
 Thou know'st the city of Pallas; from the cave
 Deep in the hollow rock a new-born babe,
 Laid as he is, and all his vestments with him, 40
 Bring to thy brother to my shrine, and place
 At the entrance of my temple: of the rest,
 (For, know, the child is mine,) I will take care.'
 To gratify my brother thence I bore
 The osier-woven ark, and place the boy 45
 Here at the temple's base, the wreathed lid
 Uncovering, that the infant might be seen.
 It chanced, as the orient sun the steep of heav'n
 Ascended, to the god's oracular seat
 The priestess entering, on the infant cast 50
 Her eye, and marvell'd, deeming that some nymph
 Of Delphi at the fane had dared to lay
 The secret burden of her womb: this thought
 Prompts her to move it from the shrine; but soon

30 Minerva took on herself the care of this earth-born child. One day, going to Pallene, she delivered him to the three daughters of Cecrops and Aglauros in a little chest, charging them not to open it before her return. Curiosity however tempted them to disobey her command; they opened the chest, and saw two serpents wreathed around the infant.

33 It was the universal practice of the ancients, in their unnatural custom of exposing their children, to leave something of value, at least of ornament, with the infant.

To pity she resign'd the harsh intent ; 55
 The impulse of the god secretly acting
 In favor of the child, that in his temple
 It might abide : her gentle hand then took it,
 And gave it nurture ; yet conceived she not
 That Phœbus was the sire, nor who the mother 60
 Knew aught, nor of his parents could the child
 Give information. All his youthful years
 Sportive he wander'd round the shrine, and there
 Was fed : but when his firmer age advanced
 To manhood, o'er the treasures of the god 65
 The Delphians placed him, to his faithful care
 Consigning all ; and in this royal dome
 His hallow'd life he to this hour hath pass'd.
 Meantime Creusa, mother of the child,
 To Xuthus was espoused, the occasion this : 70
 On Athens from Eubœan Chalcis roll'd
 The waves of war ; he join'd their martial toil,
 And with his spear repell'd the foe ; for this
 To the proud honor of Creusa's bed
 Advanced ; no native, in Achaia sprung 75
 From Æolus, the son of Jove. Long time
 Unbless'd with children, to the oracular shrine
 Of Phœbus are they come, through fond desire
 Of progeny : to this the god hath brought
 The fortune of his son, nor, as was deem'd, 80
 Forgets him ; but to Xuthus, when he stands
 This sacred seat consulting, will he give
 That son, declared his offspring ; that the child,
 When to Creusa's house brought back, by her
 May be agnised ; the bridal rites of Phœbus 85
 Kept secret, that the youth may claim the state
 Due to his birth, through all the states of Greece
Named Ion, founder of the colonies
On the Asiatic coast. The laurell'd cave

ION.

57

Now will I visit, there to learn what fortune 90
Is to the boy appointed, for I see
This son of Phœbus issuing forth to adorn
The gates before the shrine with laurel boughs.
First of the gods, I hail him by the name
Of Ion, which his fortune soon will give him. 95

ION.

Now flames this radiant chariot of the sun
High o'er the earth, at whose ethereal fire
The stars into the sacred night retreat :
O'er the Parnassian cliffs the ascending wheels
To mortals roll the beams of day ; the wreaths 100
Of incense-breathing myrrh mount to the roof
Of Phœbus' fane ; the Delphic priestess now
Assumes her seat, and from the hallow'd tripod
Pronounces to the Greeks the oracular strains
Which the god dictates. Haste, ye Delphic train, 105
Haste to Castalia's silver-streaming fount ;
Bathed in its chaste dew to the temple go ;
There from your guarded mouths no sound be heard
But of good omen, that to those, who crave
Admission to the oracle, your voice 110
May with auspicious words expound the answers.
My task, which from my early infancy
Hath been my charge, shall be with laurel boughs
And sacred wreaths to cleanse the vestibule
Of Phœbus, on the pavement moistening dew 115

106 The temple of Apollo was situated above the town of Delphi, under the rocks of Parnassus. Ascending from the Gymnasium, the celebrated fountain of Castalia flows on the right, so called from a daughter of Achelous of that name, to whom Cephissus gave this stream ; in proof of which the inhabitants of Lilæa asserted, that if cakes were on certain days thrown into the *spring of Cephissus*, they rose again in *Castalia*.

To rain, and with my bow to chase the birds
 Which would defile the hallow'd ornaments.
 A mother's fondness, and a father's care
 I never knew ; the temple of the god
 Claims then my service, for it nurtured me. 120

STROPHE.

Haste, thou verdant new-sprung bough,
 Haste, thy early office know ;
 Branch of beauteous laurel come,
 Sweep Apollo's sacred dome,
 Cropp'd this temple's base beneath, 125
 Where the immortal gardens breathe,
 And eternal dews that round
 Water the delicious ground,
 Bathe the myrtle's tresses fair.
 Lightly thus, with constant care, 130
 The pavement of the god I sweep,
 When over the Parnassian steep
 Flames the bright sun's mounting ray ;
 This my task each rising day.
 Son of Latona, Pæan, Pæan, hail : 135
 Never, O, never may thy honors fail !

ANTISTROPHE.

Grateful is my task, who wait
 Serving, Phœbus, at thy gate ;
 Honoring thus thy hallow'd shrine,
 Honor for the task is mine. 140
 Laboring with unwilling hands,
 Me no mortal man commands :

121 This is generally understood as alluding to the transformation of Daphne ; but it has a very different meaning : a branch was cut every morning from the sacred laurel of Apollo for the purposes here mentioned, and the tree constantly produced a fresh branch against the next morning ; it is therefore called ' new-sprung : ' so the vine on the summit sacred to *Bacchus* produced the daily-ripening bunch of grapes, from which the libation was made to that god.

But, immortal gods, to you
 All my pleasing toil is due.
 Phœbus is to me a sire ; 145
 Grateful thoughts my soul inspire ;
 Nurtured by thy bounty here,
 Thee, Apollo, I revere ;
 And thy name in this rich seat
 As a father's I repeat. 150
 Son of Latona, Pæan, Pæan, hail :
 Never, O, never may thy honors fail !

Now from this labor with the laurel bough
 I cease ; and sprinkling from the golden vase
 The chaste drops which Castalia's fountain rolls, 155
 Bedew the pavement. Never may I quit
 This office to the god ; or, if I quit it,
 Be it, good Fortune, at thy favoring call !
 But see, the early birds have left their nests,
 And this way from Parnassus wing their flight. 160
 Come not, I charge you, near the battlements,
 Nor near the golden dome. Herald of Jove,
 Strong though thy beak beyond the feather'd kind,
 My bow shall reach thee. Towards the altar, see,
 A swan comes sailing : elsewhere wilt thou move 165
 Thy scarlet-tinctured foot ? or from my bow
 The lyre of Phœbus to thy notes attuned
 Will not protect thee ; farther stretch thy wings ;
 Go, wanton, skim along the Delian lake,
 Or thou wilt steep thy melody in blood. 170
 Look, what strange bird comes onwards ; wouldst
 thou fix
 Beneath the battlements thy straw-built nest ?
 My singing bow shall drive thee hence ; begone,
 Or to the banks of Alpheus, gulfy stream,
 Or to the Isthmian grove ; there hatch thy young ; 175

Mar not these pendent ornaments, nor soil
 The temple of the god : I would not kill you :
 'Twere pity, for to mortal man you bear
 The message of the gods ; yet my due task
 Must be perform'd, and never will I cease 180
 My service to the god, who nurtured me.

ION, CHORUS.

CHO. The stately column, and the gorgeous dome
 Raised to the gods, are not the boast alone
 Of our magnificent Athens ; nor the statues
 That grace her streets : this temple of the god, 185
 Son of Latona, beauteous to behold,
 Beams the resplendent light of both her children.

ION. Turn thine eyes this way : look, the son of Jove
 Lops with his golden scimitar the heads
 Of the Lernean Hydra : view it well. 190

CHO. I see him.

ION. And this other standing nigh,
 Who snatches from the fire the blazing brand.

CHO. What is his name ? The subject, on the web
 Design'd, these hands have wrought in ductile gold.

ION. The shield-supporting Iolaus, who bears 195
 The toils in common with the son of Jove.
 View now this hero ; on his winged steed
 The triple-bodied monster's dreadful force
 He conquers through the flames his jaws emit.

CHO. I view it all attentively.

ION. Observe 200
 The battle of the giants, on the walls

192 Iolaus is here plainly described as in the act of lifting the burning brand from the fire to sear the neck from which Hercules had lopped the head.

197 Bellerophon mounted on the winged Pegasus, engaging with the Chimæra.

Sculptured in stone.

CHO. Let us note this, my friends.

ION. See where against Enceladus she shakes
Her gorgon shield.

CHO. I see my goddess, Pallas. 204

ION. Mark the tempestuous thunder's flaming bolt
Launch'd by the hand of Jove.

CHO. The furious Mimas
Here blazes in the volley'd fires ; and there
Another earth-born monster falls beneath
The wand of Bacchus wreathed with ivy round,
No martial spear. But, as 'tis thine to tend 210
This temple, let me ask thee, is it lawful,
Leaving our sandals, its interior parts
To visit?

ION. Strangers, this is not permitted.

CHO. Yet may we make inquiries of thee?

ION. Speak ;

What wouldst thou know?

CHO. Whether this temple's site 215
Be the earth's centre?

ION. Ay ; with garlands hung,
And gorgons all around.

CHO. So fame reports.

ION. If at the gate the honey'd cake be offer'd,
Would you consult the oracle, advance
To the altar : till the hallow'd lamb has bled 220
In sacrifice, approach not the recess.

CHO. I am instructed ; what the god appoints
As laws, we wish not to transgress : without

202 As Athenians, nothing could be so agreeable to them as the honors paid to their tutelary goddess.

216 It is conjectured that Ion here points to a marble pillar thus adorned, fixed on the very point which they deemed the centre of the earth.

Enough of ornament delights our eyes.

ION. Take a full view of all ; that is allow'd. 225

CHO. To view the inmost shrine was our lord's order.

ION. Who are you call'd? Attendants on what house?

CHO. Our lords inhabit the magnificent domes
Of Pallas.—But she comes, of whom thou askest.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Lady, whoe'er thou art, that liberal air 230
Speaks an exalted mind : there is a grace,
A dignity in those of noble birth,
That marks their high rank. Yet I marvel much
That from thy closed lids the trickling tear
Water'd thy beauteous cheeks, soon as thine eye 235
Beheld this chaste oracular seat of Phœbus.
What brings this sorrow, lady? All besides,
Viewing the temple of the god, are struck
With joy ; thy melting eye o'erflows with tears.

CREU. Not without reason, stranger, art thou seized
With wonder at my tears : this sacred dome 241
Awakes the sad remembrance of things past.
I had my mind at home, though present here.
How wretched is our sex ! And, O ye gods,
What deeds are yours ! Where may we hope for right,
If by the injustice of your power undone? 246

ION. Why, lady, this inexplicable grief?

CREU. It matters not ; my mind resumes its firm-
ness :

I say no more ; cease thy concern for me.

ION. But say, who art thou ? whence ? what country
boasts 250

Thy birth ? and by what name may we address thee ?

CREU. Creusa is my name, drawn from Erectheus

My high-born lineage, Athens gave me birth.

ION. Illustrious is thy state ; thy ancestry
So noble, that I look with reverence on thee. 255

CREU. Happy indeed is this, in nothing farther.

ION. But tell me, is it true what fame has blazon'd ?

CREU. What wouldst thou ask ? Stranger, I wish
to know.

ION. Sprung the first author of thy line from the
earth ? 259

CREU. Ay, Erichthonius : but my race avails not.

ION. And did Minerva raise him from the earth ?

CREU. Held in her virgin hands : she bore him not.

ION. And gave him as the picture represents ?

CREU. Daughters of Cecrops these, charged not to
see him.

ION. The virgins oped the interdicted chest ? 265

CREU. And died, distaining with their blood the
rock.

ION. But tell me, is this truth, or a vain rumor ?

CREU. What wouldst thou ask ? I am not scant of
time.

ION. Thy sisters did Erectheus sacrifice ?

266 Pausanias tells us that Pandrosus obeyed the mandate of the goddess ; but that her sisters Herse and Aglauros were for their disobedience driven to madness, and threw themselves from the steepest part of the rock on which the citadel stood.

269 Erectheus had six daughters ; Procris married to Cephalus, Orithyia carried off by Boreas, Chthonia married to Butes, Creusa to Xuthus, Protogenia and Pandora. These two are the virgins here mentioned, who voluntarily offered themselves to death, to give effect to an oracle delivered to their father in his war against the Thracians. Of such oracles and such sacrifices we have instances enough. In this war Eumolpus, the Thracian king, fell by the hands of Erectheus ; and Neptune, to avenge the death of his son, struck the rocks of Macraï with his trident beneath Erectheus, who perished in the chasm.

CREU. He slew the virgins, victims for their country.

ION. And thou of all thy sisters saved alone? 271

CREU. I was an infant in my mother's arms.

ION. And did the yawning earth swallow thy father?

CREU. By Neptune's trident smote; and so he perish'd.

ION. And Macrai call you not the fatal place? 275

CREU. Why dost thou ask? What thoughts hast thou recall'd?

ION. Does Phœbus, do his lightnings honor it?

CREU. Honor! Why this? Would I had never seen it!

ION. Why? Dost thou hate the place dear to the god? 279

CREU. No: but for some base deed done in the cave.

ION. But what Athenian, lady, wedded thee?

CREU. Of Athens none, but one of foreign birth.

ION. What is his name? Noble he needs must be.

CREU. Xuthus, by Æolus derived from Jove.

ION. How weds a stranger an Athenian born? 285

CREU. Eubœa is a state neighboring on Athens.

ION. A narrow sea flows, I have heard, between.

CREU. Joining the Athenian arms, that state he wasted.

ION. Confederate in the war, thence wedded thee?

CREU. The dowry meed of war, earn'd by his spear.

ION. Comest thou with him to Delphi, or alone? 291

CREU. With him, gone now to the Trophonian shrine.

292 After the defeat of the Minyæ, their king Erginus made peace with Hercules, and wished to pass the rest of his life in the quiet enjoyment of domestic happiness. Having accumulated great wealth, his next concern was to obtain children; on this, as was usual, he consulted the oracle at Delphi: he had two sons, Trophonius and Agamedes; these became excellent architects, and adorned Greece with many magnificent temples and palaces; they built the temple of Delphi, and a treasury for Hyrieus, in which they placed a stone in such a manner that they could remove it whenever

ION. To view it, or consult the oracle ?

CREU. Both that and this, anxious for one response.

ION. For the earth's fruits consult you, or for children ?

295

CREU. Though wedded long, yet childless is our bed.

ION. Hast thou ne'er borne a child, that thou hast none ?

CREU. My state devoid of children Phœbus knows.

ION. Bless'd in all else, luckless in this alone.

CREU. But who art thou ? Bless'd I pronounce thy mother.

300

ION. Call'd, as I am, the servant of the god.

CREU. Presented by some state, or sold to this ?

ION. I know not aught save this, I am the god's.

CREU. And in my turn, stranger, I pity thee.

ION. Asking not my mother, or my lineage.

305

CREU. Hast thou thy dwelling here, or in some house ?

ION. The temple is my house, ev'n when I sleep.

CREU. A child brought hither, or in riper years ?

ION. An infant, as they say, who seem to know.

CREU. What Delphian dame sustain'd thee at her breast ?

310

ION. I never knew a breast. She nourish'd me.

CREU. Who, hapless youth ? Diseased I find disease.

ION. The priestess : as a mother I esteem her.

CREU. Who to these manly years gave thee support ?

they pleased. Hyrieus, perceiving his treasures daily diminished, placed snares around the vases which contained his silver and gold ; in one of these snares Agamedes was caught : Trophonius immediately cut off his brother's head, fearing lest the torture should compel him to discover his accomplice. Trophonius was afterwards swallowed up by an opening of the earth in the grove of Lebadea, and there a temple was built to him.

ION. The altars, and the still-succeeding strangers.

CREU. Wretched, whoe'er she be, is she that bore thee. 316

ION. I to some woman am perchance a shame.

CREU. Are riches thine? Thou art well habited.

ION. Graced with these vestments by the god I serve.

CREU. Hast thou made no attempt to trace thy birth?

ION. I have no token, lady, for a proof. 321

CREU. Ah, like thy mother doth another suffer.

ION. Who? tell me: shouldst thou help me, what a joy!

CREU. One for whose sake I come before my husband.

ION. Say for what end, that I may serve thee, lady.

CREU. To ask a secret answer of the god. 326

ION. Speak it: my service shall procure the rest.

CREU. Hear then the tale: but Modesty restrains me.

ION. Ah, let her not; her power avails not here.

CREU. My friend then says that to the embrace of Phœbus— 330

ION. A woman and the god! Say not so, stranger.

CREU. She bore a son: her father knew it not.

ION. Not so: a mortal's baseness he disdains.

CREU. This she affirms; and this, poor wretch, she suffer'd.

ION. What follow'd, if she knew the god's embrace?

CREU. The child, which hence had birth, she straight exposed. 336

ION. This exposed child, where is he? doth he live?

CREU. This no one knows; this wish I to inquire.

ION. If not alive, how probably destroy'd?

CREU. Torn, she conjectures, by some beast of prey.

ION. What ground hath she on which to build that thought? 341

CREU. Returning to the place, she found him not.

ION. Observed she drops of blood distain the path?

CREU. None, though with anxious heed she search'd around.

ION. What time hath pass'd since thus the child was lost? 345

CREU. Were he alive, his youth were such as thine.

ION. The god hath done him wrong: the unhappy mother—

CREU. Hath not to any child been mother since.

ION. What if in secret Phoebus nurtures him?

CREU. Unjust to enjoy alone a common right. 350

ION. Ah me! this cruel fate accords with mine.

CREU. For thee too thy unhappy mother mourns.

ION. Ah, melt me not to griefs I would forget!

CREU. I will be silent: but impart thy aid.

ION. Seest thou what most the inquiry will suppress? 355

CREU. And to my wretched friend what is not ill?

ION. How shall the god what he would hide reveal?

CREU. As placed on the oracular seat of Greece.

ION. The deed must cause him shame: convict him not.

CREU. To the poor sufferer 'tis the cause of grief.

ION. It cannot be: for who shall dare to give 361

The oracle? With justice would the god,

In his own dome affronted, pour on him

Severest vengeance, who should answer thee.

Desist then, lady: it becomes us ill, 365

In opposition to the god to make

Inquiries at his shrine; by sacrifice

Before their altars, or the flight of birds,

Should we attempt to force the unwilling gods

To utter what they wish not, 'twere the excess 370
 Of rudeness; what with violence we urge
 'Gainst their consent would to no good avail us:
 What their spontaneous grace confers on us,
 That, lady, as a blessing we esteem.

CHO. How numberless the ills to mortal man, 375
 And various in their form! One single blessing
 By any one through life is scarcely found.

CREU. Nor here, nor there, O Phœbus, art thou
 just
 To her; though absent, yet her words are present.
 Nor didst thou save thy son, whom it became thee 380
 To save; nor, though a prophet, wilt thou speak
 To the sad mother who inquires of thee;
 That, if he is no more, to him a tomb
 May rise; but, if he lives, that he may bless
 His mother's eyes. But even thus behoves us 385
 To omit these things, if by the god denied
 To know what most I wish.—But, for I see
 The noble Xuthus this way bend, return'd
 From the Trophonian cave; before my husband
 Resume not, generous stranger, this discourse, 390
 Lest it might cause me shame that thus I act
 In secret, and perchance lead on to questions
 I would not have explain'd. Our hapless sex
 Oft feel our husbands' rigor: with the bad
 The virtuous they confound, and treat us harshly. 395

XUTHUS, CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

XUTH. With reverence to the god my first address
 I pay: hail, Phœbus! Lady, next to thee:
 Absent so long, have I not caused thee fear?

CREU. Not much: as anxious thoughts 'gan rise,
 thou'rt come.
But, tell me, from Trophonius what reply 400

Bearest thou ; what means whence offspring may arise ?

XUTH. Unmeet he held it to anticipate
The answer of the god : one thing he told me,
That childless I should not return, nor thou,
Home from the oracle.

CREU. Goddess revered, 406
Mother of Phœbus, be our coming hither
In lucky hour ; and our connubial bed
Be by thy son made happier than before !

XUTH. It shall be so. But who is president here ?

ION. Without, that charge is mine ; within, devolved
On others, stranger, seated near the tripod ; 411
The chiefs of Delphi these, chosen by lot.

XUTH. 'Tis well : all that I want is then complete.
Let me now enter ; for the oracle
Is given, I hear, in common to all strangers 415
Before the shrine : on such a day, that falls
Propitious thus, the answer of the god
Would I receive : meanwhile, these laurel boughs
Bear round the altars ; lady, breathe thy prayers
To every god, that from Apollo's shrine 420
I may bring back the promise of a son.

CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

CREU. It shall, it shall be so. Should Phœbus now
At least be willing to redress the fault
Of former times, he would not through the whole
Be friendly to us : yet will I accept 425
What he vouchsafes us, for he is a god.

ION. Why does this stranger always thus revile
With obscure speech the god ? Is it through love
Of her, for whom she asks ? or to conceal
Some secret of importance ? But to me 430
What is the daughter of Erectheus ? Naught
Concerns it me. Then let me to my task,

And sprinkle from the golden vase the dew.
 Yet must I blame the god, if thus perforce
 He mounts the bed of virgins, and by stealth 435
 Becomes a father, leaving then his children
 To die, regardless of them. Do not thou
 Act thus ; but, as thy power is great, respect
 The virtues ; for whoe'er, of mortal men,
 Dares impious deeds, him the gods punish : how 440
 Is it then just that you, who gave the laws
 To mortals, should yourselves transgress those laws ?
 If, (though it is not thus, yet will I urge
 The subject,)—if to mortals you shall pay
 The penalty of forced embraces, thou, 445
 Neptune, and Jove, that reigns supreme in hea-
 ven,
 Will leave your temples treasureless by paying
 The mulcts of your injustice ; for unjust
 You are, your pleasures to grave temperance
 Preferring : and to men these deeds no more 450
 Can it be just to charge as crimes, these deeds
 If from the gods they imitate : on those,
 Who gave the ill examples, falls the charge.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Thee, prompt to yield thy lenient aid,
 And soothe a mother's pain ; 455
 And thee, my Pallas, martial maid,
 I call ; O, hear the strain !
 Thou, whom the Titan from the head of Jove,
 Prometheus, drew, bright Victory, come,
 Descending from thy golden throne above ; 460
 Haste, goddess, to the Pythian dome,
 Where Phœbus, from his central shrine,
 Gives the oracle divine,

By the raving maid repeated,
 On the hallow'd tripod seated : 465
 O haste thee, goddess, and with thee
 The daughter of Latona bring ;
 A virgin thou, a virgin she,
 Sisters to the Delphian king ;
 Him, virgins, let your vows implore, 470
 That now his pure oracular power
 Will to Erectheus' ancient line declare
 The blessing of a long-expected heir !

ANTISTROPHE.

To mortal man this promised grace
 Sublimest pleasure brings, 475
 When round the father's hearth a race
 In blooming lustre springs.
 The wealth, the honors, from their high-drawn line
 From sire to son transmitted down,
 Shall with fresh glory through their offspring shine,
 And brighten with increased renown : 481
 A guard, when ills begin to lower,
 Dear in fortune's happier hour ;
 For their country's safety waking,
 Firm in fight the strong spear shaking ; 485
 More than proud wealth's exhaustless store,
 More than a monarch's bride to reign,
 The dear delight, to virtue's lore
 Careful the infant mind to train.
 Doth any praise the childless state ? 490
 The joyless, loveless life I hate :
 No ; my desires to moderate wealth I bound,
 But let me see my children smile around.

EPODE.

Ye rustic seats, Pan's dear delight ;
 Ye caves of Macrai's rocky height, 495

Where oft the social virgins meet,
 And weave the dance with nimble feet ;
 Descendants from Aglauros they
 In the third line, with festive play,
 Minerva's hallow'd fane before 500
 The verdant plain light-tripping o'er,
 When thy pipe's quick-varying sound
 Rings, O Pan, these caves around ;
 Where, by Apollo's love betray'd,
 Her child some hapless mother laid, 505
 Exposed to each night-prowling beast,
 Or to the ravenous birds a feast :
 For never have I heard it told,
 Nor wrought it in historic gold,
 That happiness attends the race, 510
 When gods with mortals mix the embrace.

ION, CHORUS.

ION. Ye female train, that place yourselves around
 This incense-breathing temple's base, your lord
 Awaiting, hath he left the sacred tripod
 And oracle, or stays he in the shrine 515
 Making inquiries of his childless state ?

CHO. Yet in the temple, stranger, he remains.

ION. But he comes forth ; the sounding doors announce

His near approach : behold, our lord is here.

XUTHUS, ION, CHORUS.

XUTH. Health to my son ! This first address is
 proper. 520

ION. I have my health : be in thy senses thou,
 And both are well.

XUTH. O let me kiss thy hand,

And throw mine arms around thee.

ION. Art thou, stranger,
Well in thy wits ; or hath the god's displeasure
Bereft thee of thy reason ?

XUTH. Reason bids, 525
That which is dearest being found, to wish
A fond embrace.

ION. Off, touch me not ; thy hands
Will mar the garlands of the god.

XUTH. My touch
Asserts no pledge : my own, and that most dear,
I find.

ION. Wilt thou not keep thee distant, ere 530
Thou hast my arrow in thy heart ?

XUTH. Why fly me,
When thou shouldst own what is most fond of thee ?

ION. I am not fond of curing wayward strangers,
And madmen.

XUTH. Kill me, raise my funeral pyre ;
But, if thou kill me, thou wilt kill thy father. 535

ION. My father thou ! how so ? it makes me laugh
To hear thee.

XUTH. This my words may soon explain.

ION. What wilt thou say to me ?

XUTH. I am thy father,
And thou my son.

ION. Who declares this ?

XUTH. The god,
That nurtured thee, though mine.

ION. Thou to thyself 540
Art witness.

XUTH. By the oracle inform'd.

ION. Misled by some dark answer.

XUTH. Well I heard it.

ION. What were the words of Phœbus ?

XUTH. That who first
Should meet me—

ION. How ? what meeting ?

XUTH. As I pass'd
Forth from the temple.

ION. What the event to him ? 545

XUTH. He is my son.

ION. Born so, or by some other
Presented ?

XUTH. Though a present, born my son.

ION. And didst thou first meet me ?

XUTH. None else, my son.

ION. This fortune whence ?

XUTH. At that we marvel both.

ION. Who is my mother ?

XUTH. That I cannot say. 550

ION. Did not the god inform thee ?

XUTH. Through my joy,
For this I ask'd not.

ION. Haply from the earth
I sprung, my mother.

XUTH. No, the earth no sons
Produces.

ION. How then am I thine ?

XUTH. I know not ;
To Phœbus I appeal.

ION. Be this discourse 555
Changed to some other.

XUTH. This delights me most.

ION. Hast thou e'er mounted an unlawful bed ?

XUTH. In foolishness of youth.

ION. Was that before
Thy marriage with the daughter of Erechtheus ?

XUTH. Since never.

ION. Owe I then my birth to that? 560

XUTH. The time agrees.

ION. How came I hither then?

XUTH. I can form no conjecture.

ION. Was I brought

From some far distant part?

XUTH. That fills my mind

With doubtful musings.

ION. Didst thou e'er before

Visit the Pythian rock?

XUTH. Once, at the feast 565

Of Bacchus.

ION. By some public host received?

XUTH. Who with the Delphian damsels—

ION. To the orgies

Led thee, or how?

XUTH. And with the Mænades

Of Bacchus—

ION. In the temperate hour, or warm

With wine?

XUTH. Amidst the revels of the god. 570

ION. From thence I date my birth.

XUTH. And fate, my son,

Hath found thee.

ION. How then came I to the temple?

XUTH. Perchance exposed.

ION. The state of servitude

Have I escaped.

XUTH. Thy father now, my son,

Receive.

ION. Indecent were it in the god 575

Not to confide.

XUTH. Thy thoughts are just.

ION. What else

Would we?

XUTH. Thou seest what thou oughtst to see.

ION. Am I the son then of the son of Jove?

XUTH. Such is thy fortune.

ION. Those that gave me birth

Do I embrace?

XUTH. Obedient to the god. 580

ION. My father, hail!

XUTH. That dear name I accept

With joy.

ION. This present day—

XUTH. Hath made me happy.

ION. O my dear mother, when shall I behold

Thy face? Whoe'er thou art, more wish I now

To see thee, than before; but thou perchance 585

Art dead, and nothing our desires avail.

CHO. We in the blessings of your house rejoice.

Yet wish we that our mistress too were happy

In children, and the lineage of Erectheus.

XUTH. Well hath the god accomplish'd this, my son,

Discovering thee, well hath he join'd thee to me; 591

And thou hast found the most endearing ties,

To which, before this hour, thou wast a stranger.

And the warm wish, which thou hast well conceived,

Is likewise mine, that thou mayst find thy mother; 595

I from what woman thou derivate thy birth.

This, left to time, may haply be discover'd.

Now quit this hallow'd earth, the god no more

Attending, and to mine accord thy mind,

To visit Athens, where thy father's sceptre, 600

No mean one, waits thee, and abundant wealth:

Nor, though thou grieve one parent yet unknown,

Shalt thou be censured as ignobly born,

578 Xuthus was the son of Æolus, to whom Jupiter was father.

Or poor : no, thou art noble, and thy state
 Adorn'd with rich possessions. Thou art silent. 606
 Why is thine eye thus fix'd upon the ground ?
 Why on thy brow that cloud ? The smile of joy
 Vanish'd, thou strikest thy father's heart with fear.

ION. Far other things appear when nigh, than seen
 At distance. I indeed embrace my fortune, 610
 In thee my father found. But hear what now
 Wakes sad reflections. Proud of their high race
 Are your Athenians, natives of the land,
 Not drawn from foreign lineage : I to them
 Shall come unwelcome, in two points defective, 615
 My father not a native, and myself
 Of spurious birth : loaded with this reproach,
 If destitute of power, I shall be held
 Abject and worthless : should I rush amongst
 The highest order of the state, and wish 620
 To appear important, inferior ranks
 Will hate me ; aught above them gives disgust.
 The good, the wise, men form'd to serve the state,
 Are silent, nor at public honors aim
 Too hastily : by such, were I not quiet 625
 In such a bustling state, I should be deem'd
 Ridiculous, and proverb'd for a fool.
 Should I attain the dignity of those,
 Whose approved worth hath raised them to the height
 Of public honors, by such suffrage more 630
 Should I be watch'd ; for they, that hold in states
 Rule and pre-eminence, bear hostile minds
 To all that vie with them. And should I come
 To a strange house a stranger, to a woman
 Childless herself, who that misfortune shared 635
 Before with thee, now sees it her sole lot,
 And feels it bitterly, would she not hate me,
 And that *with justice* ? When I stand before thee,

With what an eye would she, who hath no child,
Look on thy child? In tenderness to her, 640
Thy wife, thou must forsake me, or embroil
Thy house in discord, if thou favor me.

What murderous means, what poisonous drugs for
men

Have women with inventive rage prepared?
Besides, I have much pity for thy wife, 645

Now growing old without a child, that grief
Unmerited, the last of her high race,

The exterior face indeed of royalty,
So causelessly commended, hath its brightness;

Within, all gloom: for what sweet peace of mind, 650

What happiness is his, whose years are pass'd

In comfortless suspicion, and the dread

Of violence? Be mine the humble blessings

Of private life, rather than be a king, 655

From the flagitious forced to choose my friends,
And hate the virtuous through the fear of death.

Gold, thou mayst tell me, hath o'er things like these

A sovereign power, and riches give delight:

I have no pleasure in this noisy pomp,
Nor, whilst I guard my riches, in the toil: 660

Be mine a modest mean that knows not care.

And now, my father, hear the happy state

I here enjoy'd; and first, to mortal man

That dearest blessing, leisure, and no bustle
To cause disturbance: me no ruffian force 665

Shoved from the way: it is not to be borne,

When every insolent and worthless wretch

Makes you give place. The worship of the god

Employ'd my life, or, (no displeasing task,)
Service to men well pleased: the parting guest 670

I bade farewell—welcomed the new-arrived.

Thus something always new made every hour

Glide sweetly on ; and to the human mind
 That dearest wish, though some regard it not,
 To be, what duty and my nature made me, 675
 Just to the god : revolving this, my father,
 I wish not for thy Athens to exchange
 This state ; permit me to myself to live :
 Dear to the mind pleasures that arise
 From humble life, as those which greatness brings.

CHO. Well hast thou said, if those, whom my soul
 holds 681

Most dear, shall in thy words find happiness.

XUTH. No more of this discourse ; learn to be happy.
 It is my will that thou begin it here,
 Where first I found thee, son : a general feast 685
 Will I provide, and make a sacrifice,
 Which at thy birth I made not : at my table
 Will I receive thee as a welcome guest,
 And cheer thee with the banquet, then conduct thee
 To Athens with me as a visitant, 690
 Not as my son : for, 'midst my happiness,
 I would not grieve my wife, who hath no child.
 But I will watch the occasions time may bring,
 And so present thee, and obtain her leave
 That thou mayst hold the sceptre which I bear. 695
 Ion I name thee, as befits thy fortune,
 As first thou met'st me from the hallow'd shrine
 As I came forth : assemble then thy friends,
 Invite them all to share the joyful feast,
 Since thou art soon to leave the Delphic state. 700
 And you, ye females, keep, I charge you, keep
 This secret ; she that tells my wife shall die.

ION. Let us then go : yet one thing to my fortune
 Is wanting : if I find not her that bore me,
 Life hath no joy. Might I indulge a wish, 705
 It were to find her an Athenian dame,

That from my mother I might dare to assume
 Some confidence ; for he, whose fortune leads him
 To a free state proud of their unmix'd race,
 Though call'd a citizen, must close his lips 710
 With servile awe, for freedom is not his.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Yes, sisters, yes, the streaming eye,
 The swelling heart I see, the bursting sigh,
 When thus rejoicing in his son
 Our queen her royal lord shall find, 715
 And give to grief her anguish'd mind,
 Afflicted, childless, and alone.

What means this voice divine,
 Son of Latona, fate-declaring power ?
 Whence is this youth, so fondly graced, 720
 That to ripe manhood, from his infant hour,
 Hath in thy hallow'd courts been placed,
 And nurtured at thy shrine ?
 Thy dark reply delights not me ;
 Lurking beneath close fraud I see : 725
 Where will this end ? I fear, I fear—

'Tis strange, and strange events must hence ensue :
 But grateful sounds it to his ear,
 The youth, that in another's state
 (Who sees not that my words are true ?) 730
 Enjoys the fraud, and triumphs in his fate.

ANTISTROPHE.

Say, sisters, say, with duteous zeal
 Shall we this secret to our queen reveal ?
 She, to her royal lord resign'd,
 With equal hope, with equal care, 735
 Form'd her his joys, his griefs to share,
And gave him all her willing mind.

But joys are his alone;
 Whilst she, poor mourner, with a weight of woes,
 To hoary age advancing, bends ; 740
 He the bright smile of prosperous fortune knows.
 Ev'n thus, unhonor'd by his friends,
 Placed on another's throne,
 Mischance and ruin on him wait,
 Who fails to guard its happy state, 745
 Him may mischance and ruin seize,
 Who round my loved queen spreads his wily trains :
 No god may his oblation please,
 No favoring flame to him ascend !
 To her my faith, my zeal remains, 750
 Known to her ancient royal house a friend.

EPODE.

Now the new father and the new-found son
 The festive table haste to spread,
 Where to the skies Parnassus lifts his head,
 And deep beneath the hanging stone 755
 Forms in its rudely-rifted side
 A cavern wild and wide ;
 Where Bacchus, shaking high his midnight flames,
 In many a light fantastic round
 Dances o'er the craggy ground, 760
 And revels with his frantic dames.
 Ne'er to my city let him come,
 This youth ; no, rather let him die,
 And sink into an early tomb !
 With an indignant eye 765
 Athens would view the stranger's pride
 Within her gates triumphant ride :
 Enough for her the honor'd race that springs
 From old Erectheus and her line of kings.

CREUSA, TUTOR, CHORUS.

CREU. Thou venerable man, whose guiding voice
 My father, whilst he lived, revered, advance 771
 Up to the oracular seat thy aged steps;
 That, if the royal Phœbus should pronounce
 Promise of offspring, thou with me mayst share
 The joy; for pleasing is it when with friends 775
 Good fortune we receive: if aught of ill
 (Avert it, Heaven!) befalls, a friend's kind eye
 Beams comfort: thee, as once thou didst revere
 My father, though thy queen, I now revere.

TUT. In thee, my child, the nobleness of manners,
 Which graced thy royal ancestors, yet lives; 781
 Thou never wilt disgrace thy high-born lineage.
 Lead me then, lead me to the shrine, support me:
 High is the oracular seat, and steep the ascent;
 Be thou assistant to the foot of age. 785

CREU. Follow; be heedful where thou set thy steps.

TUT. I am: my foot is slow, my heart hath wings.

CREU. Fix thy staff firm on this loose-rolling ground.

TUT. That hath no eyes; and dim indeed my sight.

CREU. Well hast thou said: on cheerful then, and
 faint not. 790

TUT. I have the will, but o'er constraint no power.

CREU. Ye females, on my richly-broider'd works
 Faithful attendants, say, respecting children,
 For which we came, what fortune hath my lord
 Borne hence? If good, declare it: you shall find 795
 That to no thankless masters you give joy.

CHO. O fortune!

CREU. To thy speech this is a poem
 Not tuned to happiness.

CHO. Unhappy fortune!
But why distress me for the oracle

Given to our lords? Be that as fate requires. 800
In things, which threaten death, what shall we do?

CREU. What means this strain of wo? Whence are
these fears?

CHO. What! shall we speak, or bury this in silence?

CREU. Speak, though thy words bring wretchedness
to me.

CHO. It shall be spoken, were I twice to die. 805
To thee, my queen, it is not given to clasp
In thy fond arms a child, or at thy breast
To hold it.

TUT. O my child, would I were dead!

CREU. Yes, this is wretchedness indeed, a grief
That makes life joyless.

TUT. This is ruin to us. 810

CREU. Unhappy me! this is a piercing grief,
That rends my heart with anguish.

TUT. Groan not yet.

CREU. Yet is the affliction present.

TUT. Till we learn—

CREU. To me what tidings?

TUT. If a common fate
Await our lord, partaker of thy griefs, 815
Or thou alone art thus unfortunate,

CHO. To him, old man, the god hath given a son,
And happiness is his unknown to her.

CREU. To ill this adds the deepest ill, a grief
For me to mourn.

TUT. Born of some other woman 820
Is this child yet to come, or did the god
Declare one now in being?

CHO. One advanced
To manhood's prime he gave him: I was present.

CREU. What hast thou said? Thy words denounce
to me

Sorrows past speech, past utterance.

TUT. And to me. 825

CREU. How was this oracle accomplish'd? Tell me
With clearest circumstance: who is this youth?

CHO. Him as a son Apollo gave, whom first,
Departing from the god, thy lord should meet.

CREU. O my unhappy fate! I then am left 830
Childless to pass my life, childless, alone,
Amidst my lonely house! Who was declared?
Whom did the husband of this wretch first meet?
How meet him? Where behold him? Tell me all.

CHO. Dost thou, my honor'd mistress, call to mind
The youth that swept the temple? This is he. 836

CREU. O, through the liquid air that I could fly,
Far from the land of Greece, ev'n to the stars
Fix'd in the western sky! Ah me, what grief,
What piercing grief is mine!

TUT. Say, by what name 840
Did he address his son, if thou hast heard it;
Or does it rest in silence, yet unknown?

CHO. Ion, for that he first advanced to meet him.

TUT. And of what mother?

CHO. That I could not learn:
Abrupt was his departure (to inform thee 845
Of all I know, old man) to sacrifice,
With hospitable rites, a birth-day feast;
And in the hallow'd cave, from her apart,
With his new son to share the common banquet.

TUT. Lady, we by thy husband are betray'd, 850
For I with thee am grieved, with contrived fraud
Insulted, from thy father's house cast forth.

I speak not this in hatred to thy lord,
But that I love thee more: a stranger he
Came to the city and thy royal house, 855
And wedded thee, all thy inheritance

Receiving, by some other woman now
 Discover'd to have children privately :
 How privately, I'll tell thee : when he saw
 Thou hadst no child, it pleased him not to bear 860
 A fate like thine ; but by some favorite slave,
 His paramour by stealth, he hath a son.
 Him to some Delphian gave he, distant far
 To educate ; who to this sacred house
 Consign'd, as secret here, received his nurture. 865
 He knowing this, and that his son advanced
 To manhood, urged thee to attend him hither,
 Pleading thy childless state. Nor hath the god
 Deceived thee : he deceived thee, and long since
 Contrived this wily plan to rear his son, 870
 That, if convicted, he might charge the god,
 Himself excusing : should the fraud succeed,
 He would observe the times when he might safely
 Consign to him the empire of thy land.
 And this new name was at his leisure form'd, 875
 Ion, for that he came by chance to meet him.
 I hate those ill-designing men, that form
 Plans of injustice, and then gild them over
 With artificial ornament : to me
 Far dearer is the honest simple friend, 880
 Than one, whose quicker wit is train'd to ill.
 And to complete this fraud, thou shalt be urged
 To take into thy house, to lord it there,
 This low-born youth, this offspring of a slave.
 Though ill, it had been open, had he pleaded 885
 Thy want of children, and, thy leave obtain'd,
 Brought to thy house a son that could have boasted
 His mother noble ; or, if that displeased thee,
 He might have sought a wife from Æolus.
 Behoves thee then to act a woman's part, 890
 Or grasp the sword, or drug the poison'd bowl,

Or plan some deep design to kill thy husband,
 And this his son, before thou find thy death
 From them: if thou delay, thy life is lost :
 For when beneath one roof two foes are met, 895
 The one must perish. I with ready zeal
 Will aid thee in this work, and kill the youth,
 Entering the grot where he prepares the feast ;
 Indifferent in my choice, so that I pay
 What to my lords I owe, to live or die. 900
 If there is aught that causes slaves to blush,
 It is the name ; in all else than the free
 The slave is nothing worse, if he be virtuous.

CHLO. I too, my honor'd queen, with cheerful mind
 Will share thy fate, or die, or live with honor. 905

CREU. How, O my soul, shall I be silent, how
 Disclose this secret ? Can I bid farewell
 To modesty ? What else restrains my tongue ?
 To how severe a trial am I brought !
 Hath not my husband wrong'd me ? Of my house 910
 I am deprived, deprived of children ; hope
 Is vanish'd, which my heart could not resign,
 With many an honest wish this furtive bed
 Concealing, this lamented bed concealing.
 But by the star-bespangled throne of Jove, 915
 And by the goddess high above my rocks
 Enshrined, by the moist banks that bend around
 The hallow'd lake by Triton form'd, no longer
 Will I conceal this bed, but ease my breast,
 The oppressive load discharged. Mine eyes drop
 tears, 920

My soul is rent, to wretchedness ensnared
 By men, by gods, whom I will now disclose,
 Unkind betrayers of the beds they forced.
 O thou, that wakest on thy seven-string'd lyre
Sweet notes, that from the rustic lifeless horn 925

Enchant the ear with heavenly melody,
 Son of Latona, thee before this light
 Will I reprove. Thou camest to me, with gold
 Thy locks all glittering, as the vermeil flowers
 I gather'd in my vest to deck my bosom 930
 With the spring's glowing hues: in my white hand
 Thy hand enlocking, to the cavern'd rock
 Thou ledd'st me; naught avail'd my cries, that call'd
 My mother: on thou ledd'st me, wanton god,
 Immodestly, to Venus paying homage. 935
 A son I bear thee, O my wretched fate!
 Him (for I fear'd my mother) in thy cave
 I placed, where I unhappy was undone
 By thy unhappy love. Wo, wo is me!
 And now my son and thine, ill-fated babe, 940
 Is rent by ravenous vultures; thou, meanwhile,
 Art to thy lyre attuning strains of joy.
 Son of Latona, thee I call aloud,
 Who from thy golden seat, thy central throne,
 Utterest thine oracle: my voice shall reach 945
 Thine ear: ungrateful lover, to my husband,
 No grace requiting, thou hast given a son
 To bless his house; my son and thine, unown'd,
 Perish'd a prey to birds; the robes that wrapp'd
 The infant's limbs, his mother's work, lost with him.
 Delos abhors thee, and the laurel boughs 951
 With the soft foliage of the palm o'erhung,
 Grasping whose round trunk with her hands divine,
 Latona thee, her hallow'd offspring, bore.

952 The palm-tree was by various nations esteemed an emblem of honor, and even of royalty. The Jews used to carry boughs of it at some of their festivals; and particularly at the celebration of their nuptials; and it was thought to have an influence at the birth. Euripides alludes to this in his *Ion*, where he makes Latona recline herself against a palm-tree, when she is going to produce Apollo and Diana.

CHO. Ah, what a mighty treasury of ills 955
Is open'd here, a copious source of tears!

TUT. Never, my daughter, can I sate my eyes
With looking on thy face; astonishment
Bears me beyond my senses. I had steimm'd
One tide of evils, when another flood 960

High-surfing overwhelm'd me from the words
Which thou hast utter'd, from the present ills
To an ill train of other woes transferr'd.
What say'st thou? Of what charge dost thou implead
The god? What son hast thou brought forth? Where
placed him 965

A feast for vultures? Tell me all again.

CREU. Though I must blush, old man, yet I will
speak.

TUT. I mourn with generous grief at a friend's woes.

CREU. Hear then: the northward-pointing cave thou
knowest,

And the Cecropian rocks, which we call Macrai. 970

TUT. Where stands a shrine to Pan, and altars
nigh.

CREU. There in a dreadful conflict I engaged.

TUT. What? my tears rise ready to meet thy words.

CREU. By Phœbus drawn reluctant to his bed. 974

TUT. Was this, my daughter, such as I suppose?

CREU. I know not: but if truth, I will confess it.

TUT. Didst thou in silence mourn this secret ill?

CREU. This was the grief I now disclose to thee.

TUT. This love of Phœbus how didst thou con-
ceal?

CREU. I bore a son. Hear me, old man, with pa-
tience. 980

TUT. Where? who assisted? or wast thou alone?

CREU. Alone, in the same cave where compress'd.

TUT. Where is thy son, that childless now no more—

CREU. Dead, good old man, to beasts of prey exposed.

TUT. Dead! and the ungrateful Phœbus give no aid? 985

CREU. None: in the house of Pluto a young guest.

TUT. Whose hands exposed him? Surely not thine own.

CREU. Mine, in the shades of night, wrapp'd in his vests.

TUT. Hadst thou none with thee conscious to this deed?

CREU. My misery, and the secret place alone. 990

TUT. How durst thou in the cavern leave thy son?

CREU. How? uttering many sad and plaintive words.

TUT. Ah, cruel was thy deed, the god more cruel.

CREU. Hadst thou but seen him stretch his little hands! 994

TUT. Seeking the breast, or reaching to thy arms?

CREU. To this, deprived of which he suffer'd wrong.

TUT. And what induced thee to expose thy child?

CREU. Hope that the god's kind care would save his son.

TUT. How are the glories of thy house destroy'd!

CREU. Why, thine head cover'd, dost thou pour these tears? 1000

TUT. To see thee and thy father thus unhappy.

CREU. This is the state of man: nothing stands firm.

TUT. No longer then, my child, let grief oppress us.

CREU. What should I do? In misery all is doubt.

TUT. First on the god that wrong'd thee be avenged.

CREU. How shall a mortal 'gainst a god prevail? 1006

996 'To this,' pointing to her breast.

TUT. Set this revered oracular shrine on fire.

CREU. I fear: ev'n now I have enough of ills.

TUT. Attempt what may be done then; kill thy husband.

CREU. The nuptial bed I reverence, and his goodness. 1010

TUT. This son then, which is now brought forth against thee.

CREU. How? Could that be, how warmly should I wish it!

TUT. Thy train bath swords; instruct them to the deed.

CREU. I go with speed: but where shall it be done?

TUT. In the hallow'd tent, where now he feasts his friends. 1015

CREU. An open murder, and with coward slaves!

TUT. If mine displease, propose thou some design.

CREU. I have it, close, and easy to achieve.

TUT. In both my faithful services are thine.

CREU. Hear then: not strange to thee the giants' war. 1020

TUT. When they in Phlegra fought against the gods.

CREU. There the earth brought forth the Gorgon, horrid monster.

TUT. In succor of her sons to annoy the gods?

CREU. Ev'n so: her Pallas slew, daughter of Jove.

TUT. What fierce and dreadful form did she then wear? 1025

CREU. Her breastplate arm'd with vipers wreathed around.

TUT. A well-known story; often have I heard it.

CREU. Her spoils before her breast Minerva wore.

TUT. The ægis; so they call the vest of Pallas.

CREU. So named, when in the war she join'd the gods. 1030

TUT. But how can this, my child, annoy thy foes?

CREU. Thou canst not but remember Erichthonius.

TUT. Whom first of thy high race the earth brought forth.

CREU. To him, while yet an infant, Pallas gave—

TUT. What? Thy slow preface raises expectation.

CREU. Two drops of blood that from the Gorgon fell. 1036

TUT. And on the human frame what power have these?

CREU. The one works death, the other heals disease.

TUT. In what around the infant's body hung? 1039

CREU. Inclosed in gold: he gave them to my father.

TUT. At his decease then they devolved to thee?

CREU. Ay, and I wear it as a bracelet; look.

TUT. Their double qualities how temper'd, say.

CREU. This drop, which from her hollow vein distill'd,—

TUT. To what effect applied? What is its power?

CREU. Medicinal, of sovereign use to life. 1046

TUT. The other drop, what faculties hath that?

CREU. It kills, the poison of the Gorgon dragons.

TUT. And dost thou bear this gore blended in one?

CREU. No, separate; for with ill good mixes not.

TUT. O my dear child, thou hast whate'er we want.

CREU. With this the boy shall die, and thou shalt kill him. 1052

TUT. Where? How? 'Tis thine to speak, to dare be mine.

CREU. At Athens, when he comes beneath my roof.

TUT. I like not this; what I proposed displeased.

CREU. Dost thou surmise what enters now my thoughts? 1056

TUT. Suspicion waits thee, though thou kill him not.

CREU. Thou hast judged well : a stepdame's hate is
proverb'd.

TUT. Then kill him here ; thou mayst disown the
deed.

CREU. My mind ev'n now anticipates the pleasure.

TUT. Thus shalt thou meet thy husband's wiles with
wiles. 1061

CREU. This shalt thou do : this little golden cas-
ket

Take from my hand, Minerva's gift of old ;
To where my husband secretly prepares
The sacrifice, bear this beneath thy vest, 1065
That, supper ended, when they are to pour
Libations to the gods, thou mayst infuse
In the youth's goblet this : but take good heed,
Let none observe thee ; drug his cup alone
Who thinks to lord it in my house : if once 1070
It pass his lips, his foot shall never reach
Illustrious Athens : death awaits him here.

TUT. Go thou then to the hospitable house
Prepared for thy reception : be it mine,
Obedient to thy word, to do this deed. 1075
Come then, my aged foot, be once more young
In act, though not in years, for past recall
That time is fled : kill him, and bear him forth.
Well may the prosperous harbor-virtuous thought ;
But when thou wouldst avenge thee on thy foes, 1080
There is no law of weight to hinder thee.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Daughter of Ceres, Trivia, hear,
Propitious regent of each public way
Amidst the brightness of the day,
Nor less when night's dark hour engenders fear : 1085

The fulness of this goblet guide
 To check with death this stripling's pride,
 For whom my queen this fatal draught prepares,
 Tinged with the Gorgon's venom'd gore :
 That seat, which 'midst Erectheus' royal heirs 1090
 His pride claims, it shall claim no more :
 Never may one of alien blood disgrace
 The imperial honors of that high-born race !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Should not this work of fate succeed,
 Nor the just vengeance of my queen prevail ; 1095
 Should this apt time of daring fail,
 And Hope, that flatters now, desert the deed ;
 Slaughter shall other means afford,
 The strangling cord, the piercing sword ;
 For rage from disappointed rage shall flow, 1100
 And try each various form of death :
 For never shall my queen this torment know ;
 Ne'er, whilst she draws this vital breath,
 Brook in her house that foreign lords should shine,
 Clothed with the splendors of her ancient line. 1105

STROPHE II.

Thou, whom the various hymn delights,
 When thy bright choir of beauteous dames among,
 Dancing the stream's soft brink along,
 Thou seest the guardian of thy mystic rites,
 Thy torch its midnight vigils keep, 1110
 Thine eye meantime disdaining sleep ;
 Whilst with thee dances Jove's star-spangled plain,
 And the moon dances up the sky :

1106, &c. The Chorus in this strophe marks the sacred magnificence of Athens by the celebration of the mysteries of Bacchus, Proserpine, and Ceres, in common, on the 20th day of August.

Ye nymphs, that lead to grots your frolic train,
 Beneath the gulfy founts that lie : 1115
 Thou gold-crown'd queen through night's dark regions
 fear'd,

And thou, her mother, power revered,
 How should I blush, to see this youth unknown,
 This Delphic vagrant, hope to seize the throne !

ANTISTROPHE II.

You, who, the melting soul to move, 1120
 In loose, dishonest airs the Muse employ
 To celebrate love's wanton joy,
 The joy of unallow'd, unholy love,
 See how our pure and modest law
 Can lavish man's lewd deeds o'erawe ! 1125

Ye shameless bards, revoke each wanton air ;
 No more these melting measures frame ;
 Bid the chaste muse in Virtue's cause declare,
 And mark man's lawless bed with shame !
 Ungrateful is this Jove-descended lord ; 1130

For, his wife's childless bed abhorr'd,
 Lewdly he courts the embrace of other dames,
 And with a spurious son his pride inflames.

ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

ATT. Athenian dames, where shall I find our queen,
 The daughter of Erectheus ? Seeking her, 1135
 This city have I walk'd around in vain.

CHO. And for what cause, my fellow slave ? What
 means

Thy hasty foot ? What tidings dost thou bring ?

ATT. We are discover'd ; and the rulers here
 Seek her, that she may die o'erwhelm'd with stones.

CHO. Ah me, what wouldst thou say ? Are our
 designs 1141

Of secret ruin to this youth disclosed ?

ATT. They are ; and know, the worst of ills await
you.

CHO. How were our dark devices brought to light ?

ATT. The god, that justice might receive no stain,
Caused it to triumph o'er defeated wrong. 1145

CHO. How ? as a suppliant, I conjure thee tell me :
Of this inform'd, if we must die, more freely
Wish we to die, than see the light of heaven.

ATT. Soon as the husband of Creusa left 1150

The god's oracular shrine, this new-found son
He to the feast, and sacrifice prepared
To the high gods, led with him. Xuthus then

Went where the hallow'd flame of Bacchus mounts,
That on each rock's high point the victim's blood 1155

Might flow, a grateful offering for his son

Thus recognised, to whom he gave in charge,

' Stay thou, and with the artist's expert aid
Erect the sheltering tent : my rites perform'd

To the kind gods that o'er the genial bed 1160

Preside, should I be there detain'd too long,

Spread the rich table to my present friends.'

This said, he led the victims to the rocks.

Meanwhile with reverent heed the son 'gan rear

On firm supporters the wide tent, whose sides 1165

No masonry require, yet framed to exclude

The mid-day sun's hot beams, or his last rays

When sinking in the west : the lengthen'd lines

Equally distant comprehend a square

Of twice five thousand feet, (the skilful thus 1170

Compute it) space to feast (for so he will'd)

All Delphi : from the treasures of the god

He took the sacred tapestry, and around

Hung the rich shade, on which the admiring eye

Gazes with fix'd delight : first over head,

Like a broad pennon spread the extended woof,
 Which from the Amazonian spoils the son
 Of Jove, Alcides, hallow'd to the god ;
 In its bright texture interwoven a sky
 Gathering the stars in its ethereal round, 1180
 Whilst downward to the western wave the sun
 His steeds declines, and to his station high
 Draws up the radiant flame of Hesperus.
 Meanwhile the Night, robed in her sable stole,
 Her unreign'd car advances ; on her state 1185
 The stars attend ; the Pleiads mounting high,
 And with his glittering sword Orion arm'd :
 Above, Arcturus to the golden pole
 Inclines ; full-orb'd the month-dividing moon
 Takes her bright station, and the Hyades 1190
 Mark'd by the sailor ; distant in the rear,
 Aurora, ready to relume the day,
 And put the stars to flight. The sides were graced
 With various textures of the historic woof,
 Barbaric arguments ; in gallant trim 1195
 Against the fleet of Greece the hostile fleet
 Rides proudly on. Here monstrous forms portray'd
 Human and brutal mix'd : the Thracian steeds
 Are seized, the hinds, and the adventurous chase
 Of savage lions : figured nigh the doors, 1200
 Cecrops, attended by his daughters, roll'd
 His serpent train : in the ample space within
 He spread the festal table, richly deck'd
 With golden goblets. Now the herald walk'd
 His round, each native, that inclined to grace 1205
 The feast, inviting : to the crowded tent
 They hasten crown'd with garlands, and partake
 The exquisite repast. The pleased sense

1196 This naval expedition probably alludes to the ships
which Æetes sent against the Argonauts.

Now satiate, in the midst an old man stood,
 Officious in his ministry, which raised 1210
 Much mirth among the guests ; for from the urns
 He fill'd the lavers, and with fragrant myrrh
 Incensed the place ; the golden bowls he claim'd
 His charge. When now the jocund pipes 'gan breathe
 Harmonious airs, and the fresh goblet stood 1215
 Ready to walk its round, the old man said,
 ' Away with these penurious cups, and bring
 Capacious bowls ; so shall you quickly bathe
 Your spirits in delight.' With speed were brought
 Goblets of gold and silver : one he took 1220
 Of choicer frame ; and, seemingly intent
 To do his young lord honor, the full vase
 Gave to his hands, but in the wine infused
 A drug of poisonous power, which, it is said,
 His queen supplied, that the new son no more 1225
 Might view the light of heav'n ; but unobserved
 He mix'd it. As the youth among the rest
 Pour'd the libation, 'midst the attendant slaves
 Words of reproach one utter'd : he, as train'd
 Within the temple and with expert seers, 1230
 Deem'd them of evil omen, and required
 Another goblet to be fill'd afresh :
 The former, a libation to the god,
 He cast upon the ground, instructing all
 To pour, like him, the untasted liquor down. 1235
 Silence ensued : the sacred bowls we fill
 With wine of Byblos ; when a troop of doves
 Came fluttering in, for undisturb'd they haunt
 The dome of Phœbus : in the floating wine

1210 The post of cup-bearer was usually assigned to the most beautiful youths. See Homer, *Il. i.* where Vulcan, by taking on him the office of Hebe or Ganymede, raises the mirth of the gods.

They dipp'd their bills to drink, then raised their
heads, 1240

Gurgling it down their beauteous-plumed throats.
Harmless to all the spilt wine, save to her
That lighted where the youth had pour'd his bowl :
She drank, and straight convulsive shiverings seized
Her beauteous plumes ; around in giddy rings 1245
She whirl'd, and in a strange and mournful note
Seem'd to lament : amazement seized the guests,
Seeing the poor bird's pangs : her heart heaved
thick,

And stretching out her scarlet legs, she died.
Rending his robes, the son by Phœbus given 1250
Sprung from the table, and aloud exclaim'd,—
' What wretch design'd to kill me ? Speak, old man :
Officious was thy ministry ; the bowl
I from thy hand received.' Then straight he seized
His aged arm, and to the question held him, 1255
As in the fact discover'd : he thus caught,
Reluctant and constrain'd, own'd the bold deed,
The deadly goblet by Creusa drugg'd.

Forth from the tent, the guests attending, rush'd
The youth announced by Phœbus, and amidst 1260
The Pythian regents says,—' O hallow'd land !
This stranger dame, this daughter of Erectheus
Attempts my life by poison.' Then decreed
The Delphian lords (nor did one voice dissent)
That she should die, my mistress, from the rock 1265
Cast headlong, as the deed was aim'd against
A sacred life, and impiously presumed
This hallow'd place with murder to profane.
Demanded by the state, she this way bends
Her wretched steps. Unhappy, to this shrine 1270
She came through fond desire of children ; here,
Together with her hopes, her life is lost.

CHORUS.

None, there is none, from death no flight,
 To me no refuge ; our dark deed
 Betray'd, betray'd to open light; 1275
 The festive bowl, with sprightly wine that flow'd
 Mix'd with the Gorgon's viperous blood,
 An offering to the dead decreed,
 All is betray'd to light ; and I,
 Cast headlong from the rock, must die. 1280
 What flight shall save me from this death,
 Borne on swift pinions through the air,
 Sunk to the darksome cave beneath,
 Or mounted on the rapid car ?
 Or shall the flying bark unfurl its sails ? 1285
 Alas, my queen, no flight avails,
 Save when some god's auspicious power
 Shall snatch us from the dangerous hour.
 Unhappy queen, what pangs shall rend thy heart !
 Shall we, who plann'd the deathful deed, 1290
 Be caught within the toils we spread,
 Whilst Justice claims severe her chastening part ?

CREUSA, CHORUS.

CREU. I am pursued, ye faithful females, doom'd
 To death : the Pythian council hath decreed it ;
 My life is forfeited.

CHO. Unhappy lady, 1295
 We know the dreadful ills that close thee round.

CREU. Ah, whither shall I fly ? From instant death
 Scarce hath my foot sped hither, from my foes
 By stealth escaping.

CHO. Whither wouldst thou fly,
 But to this altar ?

CREU. What will that avail me ? 1300

CHO. To kill a suppliant there the law forbids.

CREU. But by the law I perish.

CHO. If their hands

Had seized thee.

CREU. Dreadful contest, with drawn swords
They hastily advance.

CHO. Now take thy seat
At the altar ; shouldst thou die ev'n there, thy blood
Will call the vengeance of the god on those 1306
That spilt it: but our fortune we must bear.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION Bull-visaged sire Cephissus, what a viper
Hast thou produced ! a dragon, from her eyes
Glaring pernicious flame. Each daring deed 1310
Is hers: less venomous the Gorgon's blood,
With which she purposed to have poison'd me.
Seize her, that the Parnassian rocks may tease
Those nice-adjusted ringlets of her hair,
As down the craggy precipice she bounds. 1315
Here my good genius saved me, e'er I came
To Athens, there beneath my stepdame's wiles
To fall ; amidst my friends thy fell intents
Have I unravell'd, what a pest to me,
Thy hate how deadly: had thy toils inclosed me 1320
In thine own house, thou wouldst at once have sent me
With complete ruin to the shades below.
But nor the altar, nor Apollo's shrine
Shall save thee. Pity, might her voice be heard,
Would rather plead for me and for my mother, 1325
She absent, yet the name remains with me.
Behold that sorceress ; with what art she wove

1308 Cephissus was the father of Diogenæa, who married
Phrasimus, and bore to him *Praxithea* the wife of *Erectheus*,
and mother of *Creusa*.

Wile after wile ; the altar of the god
Impress'd her not with awe, as if secure.

No vengeance waited her unhallow'd deeds. 1330

CREU. I charge thee, kill me not, in my own right,
And in the god's, whose suppliant here I stand.

ION. What right hast thou to plead Apollo's name ?

CREU. My person hallow'd to the god I offer.

ION. Yet wouldst thou poison one that is the god's.

CREU. Thou wast no more Apollo's, but thy father's.

ION. I have been, of a father's wealth I speak.

CREU. And I now am : thou hast that claim no
more.

ION. But thou art impious : pious were my deeds.

CREU. As hostile to my house, I would have kill'd
thee. 1340

ION. Did I against thy country march in arms ?

CREU. And more ; thou wouldst have fired Erec-
theus' house.

ION. What torch, what brands, what flames had I
prepared ?

CREU. There wouldst thou fix, seizing my right by
force.

ION. The land, which he possess'd, my father gave
me. 1345

CREU. What claim hath there the race of Æolus ?

ION. He was its guardian, not with words but arms.

CREU. Its soldier then ; an inmate, not its lord.

ION. Wouldst thou, through fear of what might hap-
pen, kill me ?

CREU. Lest death should be my portion, if not
thine. 1350

ION. Childless thou enviest that my father found me.

CREU. And wilt thou make a childless house thy
spoil ?

ION. Devolves my father then no share to me ?

CREU. His shield, his spear ; be those thine heritage.

ION. Come from the altar, quit that hallow'd seat.

CREU. Instruct thy mother, whosoe'er she be. 1356

ION. Shalt thou unpunish'd meditate my death?

CREU. Within this shrine if thou wilt murder me.

ION. What pleasure 'midst these sacred wreaths to die?

CREU. We shall grieve one, by whom we have been
grieved. 1360

ION. Strange, that the god should give these laws to
men,

Bearing no stamp of honor, nor design'd

With provident thought : it is not meet to place

The unrighteous at his altars ; worthier far

To be chased thence ; nor decent that the vile 1365

Should with their touch pollute the gods : the good,

Oppress'd with wrongs, should at those hallow'd seats

Seek refuge : ill beseems it that the unjust

And just alike should seek protection there.

PRIESTESS, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

PRIEST. Forbear, my son : leaving the oracular
seat, 1370

I pass this pale, the priestess of the god,

The guardian of the tripod's ancient law,

Call'd to this charge from all the Delphian dames.

ION. Hail, my loved mother, dear, though not my
parent.

PRIEST. Yet let me have the name, 'tis grateful to
me. 1375

ION. Hast thou yet heard their wily trains to kill me?

PRIEST. I have : but void of mercy thou dost wrong.

ION. Should I not ruin those that sought my life?

PRIEST. Stepdames to former sons are always hos-
tile.

ION. And I to stepdames, ill intreated thus. 1380

PRIEST. Be not, this shrine now leaving for thy country.

ION. How then, by thy monition, should I act?

PRIEST. Go with good omens, pure to Athens go.

ION. All must be pure, that kill their enemies.

PRIEST. So do not thou: attentive mark my words.

ION. Speak: from good will whate'er thou say'st must flow. 1386

PRIEST. Seest thou the vase I hold beneath mine arm?

ION. I see an ancient ark entwined with wreaths.

PRIEST. In this long since an infant I received thee.

ION. What say'st thou? New is thy discourse, and strange. 1390

PRIEST. In silence have I kept them: now I show them.

ION. And why conceal'd, as long since thou received'st me?

PRIEST. The god would have thee in his shrine a servant.

ION. Is that no more his will? How should I know it?

PRIEST. Thy father shown, he sends thee from this land. 1395

ION. Hast thou preserved these things by charge, or how?

PRIEST. It was the god that so disposed my thought.

ION. With what design? Speak, finish thy discourse.

PRIEST. Ev'n to this hour to keep what then I found.

ION. What gain imports this to me, or what loss?

PRIEST. There didst thou lie wrapp'd in thy infant vests. 1401

ION. Thou hast produced whence I may find my mother.

PRIEST. Since now the god so wills, but not before.

ION. This is a day of bless'd discoveries.

PRIEST. Now take them: o'er all Asia, and the bounds 1405

Of Europe hold thy progress: thou shalt know
 These tokens. To do pleasure to the god,
 I nurtured thee, my son; now to thy hand
 Restore what was his will I should receive
 Unbidden, and preserve: for what intent 1410
 It was his will, I have not power to say.
 That I had these, or where they were conceal'd,
 No mortal knew. And now farewell: the love
 I bear thee equals what a parent feels.
 Let thy inquiries where they ought begin; 1415
 First, if some Delphian virgin gave thee birth,
 And in this shrine exposed thee; next, if one
 Of Greece. From me, and from the god, who feels
 An interest in thy fortune, thou hast all.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Ah me, the moist tear trickles from mine eye,
 When I reflect that she, who gave me birth, 1421
 By stealth espoused may with like secrecy
 Have sold me, to my infant lips her breast
 Denied: but in the temple of the god,
 Without a name, a servile life I led. 1425
 All from the god was gracious, but from fortune
 Harsh: for the time, when in a mother's arms
 I in her fondness should have known some joy
 Of life, from that sweet care was I estranged,
 A mother's nurture: nor less wretched she, 1430
 Thus forced to lose the pleasure in her son.
But I will take this vase, and to the god

Bear it, a hallow'd offering ; that from thence
 I may find nothing which I would not find.
 Should she, that gave me being, chance to be 1435
 A slave, to find her were a greater ill,
 Than to rest silent in this ignorance.

O Phœbus, in thy temple hang I this.—
 What am I doing ? War I not against
 The pleasure of the god, who saved for me 1440
 These pledges of my mother ? I must dare,
 And open these : my fate cannot be shunn'd.
 Ye sacred garlands, what have you so long
 Conceal'd ; ye bands, that keep these precious relics ?
 Behold the cover of this circular vase ; 1445

Its freshness knows no change, as if a god
 So will'd ; this osier-woven ark yet keeps
 Its soundness undecay'd ; yet many a year,
 Since it contain'd this treasured charge, has pass'd.

CREU. What an unhop'd-for sight do I behold ! 1450

ION. I thought thou long hadst known to keep thee
 silent.

CREU. Silence is mine no more ; instruct not me ;
 For I behold the ark, wherein of old
 I laid thee, O my son, an infant babe ;
 And in the caves of Cecrops, with the rocks 1455
 Of Macrai roof'd, exposed thee : I will quit
 This altar, though I run on certain death.

ION. Seize her ; for by the impulse of the god
 She leaves the sculptured altar : bind her hands.

CREU. Instantly kill me, so that I embrace 1460
 This vase, and thee, and these thy conceal'd pledges.

ION. Is not this strange ? I take thee at thy word.

CREU. Not strange : a friend thou by thy friends
 art found.

ION. Thy friend ! Yet wouldst thou kill me secretly.

CREU. My son ; if that to parents is most dear. 1465

ION. Forbear thy wiles ; I shall refute them well.

CREU. Might I but come to what I wish, my son !

ION. Is this vase empty, or contains it aught ?

CREU. Thy infant vests, in which I once exposed thee.

ION. And wilt thou name them to me, ere thou see them ? 1470

CREU. If I recount them not, be death my meed.

ION. Speak then : thy confidence hath something strange.

CREU. A tissue, look, which when a child I wrought.

ION. What is it ? Various are the works of virgins.

CREU. A slight, unfinish'd essay of the loom. 1475

ION. What figure wrought ? Thou shalt not take me thus.

CREU. A Gorgon central in the warp enwoven,—

ION. What fortune hunts me, O supreme of gods !

CREU. And like an ægis edged with serpents round.

ION. Such is the woof, and such the vest I find.

CREU. Thou old embroidery of my virgin hands !

ION. Is there aught else besides this happy proof ?

CREU. Two dragons, an old work, their jaws of gold.

ION. The gift of Pallas, who thus nurtures children ?

CREU. Emblems of Erichthonius of old times. 1485

ION. Why ? for what use ? Explain these works of gold.

CREU. For ornaments to grace the infant's neck.

ION. See, here they are ; the third I wish to know.

CREU. A branch of olive then I wreathed around thee,

Pluck'd from that tree which from Minerva's rock

First sprung : if it be there, it still retains 1491

Its verdure ; for the foliage of that olive,

Fresh in immortal beauty, never fades.

ION. O my dear mother, I with joy behold thee,
With transport 'gainst thy cheek my cheek recline.

CREU. My son, my son, far dearer to thy mother
1496

Than yon bright orb, (the god will pardon me,)
Do I then hold thee in my arms, thus found
Beyond my hopes, when in the realms below,
I thought thy habitation 'mongst the dead? 1500

ION. O my dear mother, in thy arms I seem
As one that had been dead to life return'd.

CREU. Ye wide-expanded rays of heavenly light,
What notes, what high-raised strains shall tell my
joy?

This pleasure whence, this unexpected transport? 1505

ION. There was no blessing farther from my thoughts
Than this, my mother, to be found thy son.

CREU. I tremble yet.

ION. And hast thou yet a fear,
Holding me, not to hold me?

CREU. Such fond hopes
Long time have I renounced. Thou hallow'd matron,
From whom didst thou receive my infant child? 1511
What bless'd hand brought him to Apollo's shrine?

ION. It was the god's appointment: may our life
To come be happy, as the past was wretched.

CREU. Not without tears, my son, wast thou brought
forth; 1515

Nor without anguish did my hands resign thee.
Now breathing on thy cheek I feel a joy
Transporting me with heartfelt ecstasies.

ION. The words, expressive of thy joys, speak mine.

CREU. Childless no more, no more alone, my
house 1520

Now shines with festive joy; my realms now own

A lord ; Erectheus blooms again ; no more
His high-traced lineage sees night darkening round,
But glories in the sun's refulgent beams.

ION. Now let my father, since he 's present here,
Be partner of the joy which I have given you. 1526

CREU. What says my son ?

ION. Such, such as I am proved.

CREU. What mean thy words ? Far other is thy
birth.

ION. Ah me, thy virgin bed produced me base. 1529

CREU. Nor bridal torch, my son, nor bridal dance
Had graced my nuptial rites, when thou wast born.

ION. Then I'm a wretch, a base-born wretch : say
whence.

CREU. Be witness thou, by whom the Gorgon
died,——

ION. What means this adjuration ?

CREU. Who hast fix'd
High o'er my cave thy seat amidst the rocks 1535
With olive clothed.

ION. Abstruse thy words, and dark.

CREU. Where on the cliffs the nightingale attunes
Her songs, Apollo——

ION. Why Apollo named ?

CREU. Led me in secret to his bed.

ION. Speak on ;
Thy words import some glorious fortune to me. 1540

CREU. Thee in the tenth revolving month, my son,
A secret pang to Phœbus did I bear.

ION. Thy words, if true, are grateful to my soul.

CREU. These swathing bands, thy mother's virgin
work,

Wove by my flying shuttle, round thy body 1545
I roll'd ; but from thy lips my breast withheld,
A mother's nouriture, nor bathed thy hands

In cleansing lavers ; but to death exposed thee,
 Laid in the dreary cave, to birds of prey
 A feast, rent piecemeal by their ravenous beaks. 1550

ION. Cruel, my mother, was thy deed.

CREU.

By fear

Constrain'd, my son, I cast thy life away ;
 Unwillingly I left thee there to die.

ION. And from my hands unholy were thy death.

CREU. Dreadful was then my fortune, dreadful
 here, 1555

Whirl'd by the eddying blast from misery there

To misery here, and back again to joy :

Her boisterous winds are changed ; may she remain

In this repose : enough of ills are past ;

After the storm soft breathes a favoring gale. 1560

CHO. From this example 'midst the greatest ills
 Never let mortal man abandon hope.

ION. O thou, that hast to thousands wrought a change
 Of state ere this, involving them in ills,
 And raising them to happiness again ; 1565

Fortune, to what a point have I been carried,

Ready to kill my mother, horrid thought !

But in the sun's bright course each day affords

Instruction. Thee, my mother, have I found,
 In that discovery bless'd ; nor hath my birth 1570

Aught I can blame : yet one thing would I say

To thee alone :—walk this way : to thine ear

In secret would I whisper this, and throw

The veil of darkness o'er each circumstance.

Take heed, my mother, lest thy maiden fault 1575

Seeks in these secret nuptials to conceal

Its fault, then charges on the god the deed ;

And fearing my reproach, to Phœbus gives

A son, to Phœbus whom thou didst not bear.

CREU. By her, who 'gainst the giants in her car

Fought by the side of Jove, victorious Pallas, 1581
 No one of mortal race is father to thee,
 But he, who brought thee up, the royal Phœbus.

ION. Why give his son then to another father?
 Why say that I was born the son of Xuthus? 1585

CREU. Not born the son of Xuthus; but he gives
 thee,

Born from himself, (as friend to friend may give
 His son,) an heir adopted to his house.

ION. True is the god, his tripod else were vain:
 Not without cause then is my mind perplex'd. 1590

CREU. Hear what my thoughts suggest: to work
 thee good

Apollo placed thee in a noble house.
 Acknowledged his, the rich inheritance
 Could not be thine, nor could a father's name;
 For I conceal'd my nuptials, and had plann'd 1595
 To kill thee secretly: for this the god
 In kindness gives thee to another father.

ION. My mind is prompt to entertain such thoughts;
 But, entering, at his shrine will I inquire
 If from a mortal father I am sprung, 1600
 Or from Apollo.—Ha! what may this be?
 What god above the hallow'd dome unveils
 His radiant face that shines another sun?
 Haste, let us fly: the presence of the gods
 'Tis not for mortals to behold, and live. 1605

MINERVA, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

MIN. Fly not; in me no enemy you fly;
 At Athens friendly to you, and no less
 Here. From that land I come, so named from me,
 By Phœbus sent with speed: unmeet he deems it
 To show himself before you, lest with blame 1610
The past be mention'd; this he gave in charge,

To tell thee that she bore thee, and to him,
 Phœbus thy father : he, to whom he gave thee,
 Not as to the author of thy being gives thee,
 But to the inheritance of a noble house. 1615
 This declaration made, lest thou shouldst die,
 Kill'd by thy mother's wily trains, or she
 By thee, these means to save you he devised.
 These things in silence long conceal'd, at Athens
 The royal Phœbus would have made it known 1620
 That thou art sprung from her, thy father he :
 But to discharge my office, and unfold
 The oracle of the god, for which you yoked
 Your chariots, hear : Creusa, take thy son,
 Go to the land of Cecrops ; let him mount 1625
 The royal throne ; for, from Erectheus sprung,
 That honor is his due, the sovereignty
 Over my country : through the states of Greece
 Wide his renown shall spread ; for from his root
 Four sons shall spring, that to the land, the tribes,
 The dwellers on my rock, shall give their names. 1631
 Geleon the first, Hopletes, Argades,
 And from my ægis named Ægicoris :
 Their sons in fate's appointed time shall fix
 Their seats along the coast, or in the isles 1635
 Girt by the Ægean sea, and to my land
 Give strength ; extending thence the opposite plains
 Of either continent shall make their own,
 Europe and Asia, and shall boast their name
 Ionians, from the honor'd Ion call'd. 1640
 To thee by Xuthus shall a son be born,
 Dorus, from whom the Dorian state shall rise
 To high renown ; in the Pelopian land,
 Another near the Rhian cliffs, along
 The sea-wash'd coast, his potent monarchy 1645
 Shall stretch, Achæus ; and his subject realms

Shall glory in their chief's illustrious name.
 Well hath Apollo quitted him in all :
 First, without pain he caused thee bear a son.
 That from thy friends thou mightst conceal his birth ;
 After the birth, soon as his infant limbs 1651
 Thy hands had clothed, to Mercury he gave
 The charge to take the babe, and in his arms
 Convey him hither ; here with tenderness
 He nurtured him, nor suffer'd him to perish. 1655
 Guard now the secret that he is thy son,
 That his opinion Xuthus may enjoy
 Delighted : thou too hast thy blessings, lady.
 And now farewell : from this relief from ills
 A prosperous fortune I to both announce. 1660

ION. O Pallas, daughter of all-powerful Jove,
 Not with distrust shall we receive thy words :
 I am convinced that Phœbus is my father,
 My mother she, not unassured before.

CREU. Hear me too now : Phœbus I praise, before
 Unpraised ; my son he now restores, of whom 1666
 Till now I deem'd him heedless. Now these gates
 Are beauteous to mine eyes ; his oracles
 Now grateful to my soul, unpleasant late.
 With rapture on these sounding rings my hands 1670
 Now hang ; with rapture I address the gates.

MIN. This I approve, thy former wayward thoughts
 Resign'd, with honor that thou name the god.
 Slow are the gifts of Heaven, but found at length
 Not void of power.

CREU. My son, let us now go 1675
 To Athens.

MIN. Go ; myself will follow you.

CREU. A noble guard, and friendly to the state.

MIN. But seat him high on thy paternal throne.

CREU. A rich possession, and I glory in him.

CHO. Son of Latona and all-powerful Jove, 1680
Apollo, hail ! Though fortune's blackest storms
Rage on his house, the man, whose pious soul
Reveres the gods, assumes a confidence,
And justly ; for the good at length obtain
The meed of virtue ; but the unholy wretch 1685
(Such is his nature) never can be happy.

A L C E S T I S.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

▲POLLO.

ORCUS.

ALCESTIS.

ADMETUS.

EUMELUS.

HERCULES.

PHERES.

ATTENDANTS.

CHORUS of Phœæans.

A L C E S T I S.

ARGUMENT.

ADMETUS, king of Phææ in Thessaly, on his first accession to the regal power, had kindly received Apollo, who was banished from heaven, and compelled for a certain space to serve a mortal ; and the god, after he was restored to his celestial honors, did not forget that friendly house ; but when Admetus lay ill of a disease, from which there was no recovery, prevailed on the Fates to spare his life, on condition that some near relation would consent to die for him ; but neither his father, his mother, nor any of his friends was willing to pay this ransom. His wife, Alcestis, on hearing this, generously devotes her own life to save her husband's ; and whilst the whole family are plunged in grief for the loss of this exemplary woman, and are occupied in celebrating her funeral obsequies, Hercules arrives at Phææ, on his expedition to Thrace, and is hospitably entertained by Admetus, who studiously conceals the cause of his profound melancholy ; till at length, the hero, being informed of the distress of his generous host, immediately attacks Orcus, who is conveying Alcestis to the infernal regions ; and, having defeated him, recovers the lady, whom he restores to her husband.—[The scene is in the vestibule of the house of Admetus.]

APOLLO.

THY royal house, Admetus, yet again
I visit, where, a slave among thy slaves,
Thy table, though a god, I deign'd to praise ;
To this compell'd by Jove, who slew my son

The healing sage, launching against his breast 5
 The flaming thunder ; hence enraged I kill'd
 The Cyclops, that prepared his fiery bolts.
 For this a penal task my vengeful sire
 Assign'd me, to a mortal doom'd a slave
 Perforce ; I hither came, and fed his herds, 10
 Who friendly entertain'd me, guarding then,
 And to this day, his hospitable house.
 Holy the house, and holy is its lord,
 The son of Pheres ; him from death I saved,
 The Fates beguiling ; for those ancient powers 15
 Assented that Admetus should escape
 Death then approaching, would some other go,
 Exchanged for him, to the dark realms beneath.
 His friends, his father, ev'n the aged dame
 That gave him birth, were ask'd in vain ; not one 20
 Was found, his wife except ; for him she will'd
 To die, and view no more the ethereal light.
 She in the house, supported in their arms,
 Now sighs out her last breath ; for she must die,
 And this the fate-appointed day : for this, 25
 Dear as it is, I leave the friendly mansion,
 Lest there pollution find me. But I see
 Orcus advancing near, priest of the dead ;
 He to the house of Pluto will conduct her :
 Observant of the stated time he comes, 30
 True to the day, when she perforce must die.

ORCUS, APOLLO.

ORC. Why art thou here ? Why dost thou make this
 house
 Thy haunt, Apollo ? Thou dost wrong, again
 The infernal realms defrauding of their honors,
 Torn from them, or delay'd. Sufficed it not 35
To have snatch'd Admetus from his doom, the Fates

With fraudulent arts deluding? Now again
Arm'd with thy bow, why dost thou guard his wife,
Daughter of Pelias, bound by solemn vow,
Saving her husband's life, to die for him? 40

APOL. Fear not; thy right I reverence and just
claim.

ORC. What means thy bow, if thou revere the right?

APOL. It ever is my wont to bear these arms.

ORC. Ay, and unjustly to defend this house.

APOL. I mourn the afflictions of the man I love. 45

ORC. Wouldst thou defraud me of this second dead?

APOL. The first by violence I took not from thee.

ORC. How on the earth then walks he now alive?

APOL. Ransom'd by her, for whom thou now art
come.

ORC. And I will lead her to the realms below. 50

APOL. Take her: I know not if I might persuade
thee.

ORC. Him, whom I ought, to seize; for that pre-
pared.

APOL. No: but to involve in death ripe, lingering
age.

ORC. Full well I understand thy speech and zeal.

APOL. May then Alcestis to that age be spared? 55

ORC. No: honor, be assured, delights ev'n me.

APOL. Thou canst but take a single life, no more.

ORC. Greater my glory when the youthful die.

APOL. More sumptuous obsequies await her age.

ORC. This were a law in favor of the rich. 60

APOL. What secret meaning hath thy wisdom here?

ORC. They with their wealth would purchase to die
old.

59 It was customary to bury persons who died advanced
in years with greater pomp and magnificence than those who
died young.

APOL. Wilt thou not then indulge me with this grace?

ORC. Not I indeed: go to: thou know'st my manners.

APOL. Hostile to mortals, hateful to the gods. 65

ORC. Thou canst not have all that thou shouldst not have.

APOL. Yet, ruthless as thou art, soon wilt thou cease
This contest; such a man to Pheres' house

Comes, to the frozen continent of Thrace

Sent by Eurystheus for the savage steeds 70

Yoked to the tyrant's car. He, in this house

A welcome guest to Admetus, will by force

Take his wife from thee; and no thanks from me

Will be thy due; yet what I now intreat

Then thou wilt yield, and I shall hate thee still. 75

ORC. Say what thou wilt, nothing the more for that
Shalt thou from me obtain: this woman goes

(Be sure of that) to Pluto's dark domain.

I go, and with this sword assert my claim;

For sacred to the infernal gods that head, 80

Whose hair is hallow'd by this charmed blade.

CHORUS.

SEM. I. Before this royal mansion all is still:
What may this melancholy silence mean?

SEM. II. And not a friend is nigh, from whom to
learn

Whether we ought to wail the queen now dead, 85

81 It was the opinion of the ancients that the hair of the dying person was sacred to Proserpine, and that a lock of it must be cut off as an offering to the infernal queen before the soul could be released from the body. This belief was probably derived from the sacrifices, in which it was usual to cut some hairs from the forehead of the victim, and to throw them into the flames. So the dying person was considered as a *victim to the infernal powers*.

Or lives she yet, yet sees the light of heaven,
 For conjugal affection justly deem'd
 By me, by all, the noblest of her sex.

SEM. I. Hear you a cry, hear you a clash of hands
 Within, or lamentations for the dead? 90

SEM. II. Not ev'n a servant holds his station here
 Before the gates. O, 'midst this awful gloom
 Appear, bright Pæan, and dispel the storm!

SEM. I. If she were dead, they would not be thus
 silent;

Nor could the body vanish from the house. 95

SEM. II. Whence is thy confidence? My fears o'er-
 come me.

SEM. I. A wife so honor'd would Admetus bear
 Without due pomp in silence to her tomb?

SEM. II. Nor vase of fountain water do I see
 Before the doors, as custom claims, to bathe 100
 The corse; and none hath on the portal placed
 His locks, in solemn mourning for the dead
 Usually shorn; nor does the younger train
 Of females raise their sorrowing voices high.

SEM. I. Yet this the fatal day, when she must
 leave 105
 The light of heaven.

SEM. II. Why dost thou mention this?
 O, thou hast touch'd my heart, hast touch'd my
 soul.

SEM. I. When on the good afflictions fall, to grieve
 Becomes the man that hath been prized as honest.

STROPHE.

In vain, our pious vows are vain: 110
 Make we the flying sail our care,
 The light bark bounding o'er the main,
 To what new realm shall we repair?
 To Lycia's hallow'd strand?

Or where, in solitary state, 115
 'Midst thirsty deserts wild and wide
 That close him round on every side,
 Prophetic Ammon holds his awful seat?
 What charm, what potent hand
 Shall save her from the realms beneath? 120
 He comes, the ruthless tyrant Death:
 I have no priest, no altar more,
 Whose aid I may implore.

ANTISTROPHE.

O that the son of Phœbus now
 Lived to behold the ethereal light! 125
 Then might she leave the seats below,
 Where Pluto reigns in cheerless night:
 The sage's potent art,
 Till thundering Jove's avenging power
 Hurl'd his red thunders at his breast, 130
 Could, from the yawning gulf released,
 To the sweet light of life the dead restore.
 Who now shall aid impart?
 To every god at every shrine
 The king hath paid the rites divine: 135
 But vain his vows, his pious care;
 And ours is dark despair.

CHORUS, FEMALE ATTENDANT.

CHO. But of the female train one from the house
 Comes bathed in tears: what tidings shall I hear?
 To weep, if aught of ill befalls thy lords, 140
 Becomes thee: I would know if yet she lives,
 Or sinks beneath the ruthless power of death.
 ATT. As living I may speak of her, and dead.
 CHO. Living and dead at once, how may that be?

ATT. Ev'n now she sinks in death, and breathes her last. 145

CHO. Unhappy king, of what a wife bereft!

ATT. Nor knows our lord his suffering ere it comes.

CHO. Is there no hope then yet to save her life?

ATT. The inevitable day of fate is come.

CHO. Have you prepared what the sad case requires? 150

ATT. Each honor that may grace her obsequies.

CHO. Illustrious in her death, the best of wives:
The sun in his wide course sees not her equal.

ATT. The best of wives indeed: who will gainsay it?
What could the brightest pattern of her sex 155

Do more? What greater proof give of the honor

She bears her husband, than a ready will

To die for him? This all the city knows.

How in the house she hath domean'd herself

Will claim thy admiration. When she knew 160

The destined day was come, in fountain water

She bathed her lily-tinctured limbs, then took

From her rich chests, of odorous cedar form'd,

A splendid robe, and her most radiant dress:

Thus gorgeously array'd, she stood before 165

The hallow'd flames, and thus address'd her prayer:

'O queen, I go to the infernal shades;

Yet, ere I go, with reverence let me breathe

My last request: protect my orphan children;

Make my son happy with the wife he loves, 170

And wed my daughter to a noble husband;

Nor let them, like their mother, to the tomb

Untimely sink, but in their native land

Be bless'd through lengthen'd life to honor'd age.'

161 This bathing was intended as preparatory to her funeral, a ceremony always observed by the ancients.

164 This also was in order to her funeral, a sepulchral robe.

Then to each altar in the royal house 175
 She went, and crown'd it, and address'd her vows,
 Plucking the myrtle bough: nor tear, nor sigh
 Came from her, neither did the approaching ill
 Change the fresh beauties of her vermeil cheek.
 Her chamber then she visits, and her bed: 180
 There her tears flow'd, and thus she spoke:—' O bed,
 To which my wedded lord, for whom I die,
 Led me a virgin bride, farewell: to thee
 No blame do I impute, for me alone
 Hast thou destroy'd: disdaining to betray 185
 Thee, and my lord, I die: to thee shall come
 Some other woman, not more chaste, perchance
 More happy.' As she lay, she kiss'd the couch,
 And bathed it with a flood of tears; that pass'd,
 She left her chamber, then return'd, and oft 190
 She left it, oft return'd, and on the couch
 Fondly, each time she enter'd, cast herself.
 Her children, as they hung upon her robes
 Weeping, she raised, and clasp'd them to her breast
 Each after each, as now about to die. 195
 Each servant through the house burst into tears
 In pity of their mistress; she to each
 Stretch'd her right hand; nor was there one so mean,
 To whom she spoke not, and admitted him
 To speak to her again. Within the house 200
 These are our griefs. Admetus must have died,
 Have perish'd; but escaping is immersed
 In sorrows, which his heart shall ne'er forget.

CHO. Well may the groan burst from him, thus to
 lose

A wife with every excellence adorn'd. 205
 ATT. He weeps indeed, and in his arms supports
 His much-loved wife, intreats her not to leave him,
Asking impossibilities: she wastes

And fades with her disease, her languid limbs
 Supporting on his hand ; yet while some breath 210
 Of life remains, she wishes to behold
 The radiance of the sun, ('tis her last view)
 As never more to see his golden orb.

I go to tell them thou art here : not all
 Bear to their lords that firm unshaken faith, 215
 To attend them in their ills ; but thou of old
 Hast to this house approved thyself a friend.

CHO. Supreme of gods, is there no remedy
 To these afflictions ; from the storms of fate
 No refuge to our lords ? Some means of safety 220
 Hast thou assign'd ? or must these locks be shorn,
 And Sorrow robe me in her sable weeds ?

ATT. Too plain, my friends, too plain : yet to the
 gods

Breathe we our vows, for great their power to save.
 O royal Pæan, for Admetus' ills 225
 Find some relief ; assist him, O assist him :
 As thou before didst save him, save him now
 From death, repress the tyrant's murderous haste !

CHO. Alas, alas ! Wo, wo is me ! Thou son
 Of Pheres, wilt thou bear to live, deprived 230
 Of such a wife ? Will not Despair unsheathe
 The self-destroying sword ? Will it not find
 Some means of violent death ? This day thy wife,
 Dear should I say ? nay, dearest to thy soul,—
 Shalt thou see dead.—But she comes forth, and with
 her 235

Her husband. Groan, thou land of Pheres, raise
 The cry of mourning ; for the best of women
 Wastes with disease, and drooping to the earth,
 Sinks to the infernal Pluto's dreary realms.
 Never will I pronounce the nuptial state 240
 To *pleasure more allied than grief* : of old

This often have I noted, chiefly now,
 Viewing my king's affliction, who, bereft
 Of this sweet excellence, is doom'd to pass
 A solitary life estranged from joy. 245

ALCESTIS, ADMETUS, EUMELUS, CHORUS.

ALC. Thou sun, and thou fair light of day! ye
 clouds,
 That in quick eddies whirl along the sky!

ADM. Sees thee and me most wretched, yet in naught
 Offending 'gainst the gods that thou shouldst die.

ALC. O earth, ye tower'd roofs, thou bridal bed, 250
 Raised in Iolcos, my paternal seat!

ADM. O thou poor sufferer, raise thee, leave me not;
 Intreat the powerful gods to pity thee.

ALC. I see the two-oar'd boat, the Stygian barge;
 And he, that wafts the dead, grasps in his hand 255
 His pole, and calls me: 'Why dost thou delay?
 Haste thee; thou lingerest; all is ready here.'
 Charon impatient speeds me to be gone.

ADM. A melancholy voyage this to me.
 O thou unhappy, what a fate is ours! 260

ALC. He drags me, some one drags me to the gates
 That close upon the dead: dost thou not see him,
 How stern he frowns beneath his gloomy brows,
 The impetuous Pluto? What wouldst thou with me?
 Off, let me go. Ah, what a dreary path, 265
 Wretched, most wretched, must I downwards tread!

ADM. To thy friends mournful, most to me, and these
 Thy children, who with me this sorrow share.

ALC. No longer hold me up, hold me no longer;
 Here lay me down: I have not strength to stand: 270
 Death is hard by: dark night creeps o'er my eyes.
 My children, O my children, now no more,
Your mother is no more: farewell; may you

More happy see the golden light of heaven !

ADM. Ah, what a mournful word is this ! to me 275
 Than any death more painful : by the gods,
 Forsake me not : shouldst thou be taken from me,
 I were no more ; in thee I live ; thy love,
 Thy sweet society, my soul revere.

ALC. Thou seest, Admetus, what to me the Fates
 Assign ; yet, ere I die, I wish to tell thee 281
 What lies most near my heart. I honor'd thee,
 And in exchange for thine my forfeit life
 Devoted ; now I die for thee, though free
 Not to have died ; but from Thessalia's chiefs 285
 Preferring whom I pleased in royal state,
 To have lived happy here : I had no will
 To live bereft of thee with these poor orphans :
 I die without reluctance, though the gifts
 Of youth are mine to make life grateful to me. 290
 Yet he that gave thee birth, and she that bore thee,
 Deserted thee, though well it had beseem'd them
 With honor to have died for thee, to have saved
 Their son with honor, glorious in their death.
 They had no child but thee, they had no hope 295
 Of other offspring, shouldst thou die ; and I
 Might thus have lived, thou mightst have lived till age
 Crept slowly on, nor wouldst thou heave the sigh
 Thus of thy wife deprived, nor train alone
 Thy orphan children : but some god appointed 300
 It should be thus : thus be it : thou to me
 Requite this kindness : never shall I ask
 An equal retribution ; nothing bears
 A value high as life : yet my request
 Is just, thou wilt confess it ; for thy love 305
 To these our children equals mine, thy soul
 If wisdom tempers. In their mother's house
 Let them be lords : wed not again, to set

A stepdame o'er my children, some base woman
 That wants my virtues ; she, through jealousy, 310
 Will work against their lives, because to thee
 I bore them : do not this, I beg thee do not ;
 For to the offspring of a former bed

A stepdame comes sharp as a serpent's tooth.
 My son ; that holds endearing converse with thee, 315
 Hath in his father a secure protection.

But who, my daughter, shall with honor guide
 Thy virgin years ? What woman shalt thou find
 New-wedded to thy father, whose vile arts
 Will not with slanderous falsehoods taint thy name,
 And blast thy nuptials in youth's freshest bloom ? 321
 For never shall thy mother see thee led

A bride, nor at thy throes speak comfort to thee,
 Then present when a mother's tenderness
 Is most alive : for I must die ; the ill 325

Waits not a day, but quickly shall I be
 Number'd amongst the dead. Farewell, be happy.
 And thou, my husband, mayst with honor boast,
 Thou hast been wedded to a virtuous wife ;
 And you, my children, glory in your mother. 330

CNO. Fear not : I boldly pledge my faith that this
 He will perform, if Reason holds her seat.

ADM. This shall be done ; let not such fears disturb
 thee :

It shall be done ; for living thou wast mine,
 And dead thou only shalt be call'd my wife. 335

Never in thy dear place Thessalian bride
 Shall call me husband ; no, nor other woman,
 Though from a line of ancient kings she draws
 Her noble blood, and boasts each peerless grace
 Of native beauty. I am bless'd with children, 340
 Nor wish I more : in these I pray the gods
I may have joy, since all my joy in thee

Is lost. This mourning, not one single year,
 But to my life's last period, shall be borne.
 How hateful are my parents ! for their words 345
 Alone were friendly, not their deeds ; whilst thou,
 Paying the dearest forfeit for my life,
 Hast saved me. Shall I ever cease to mourn,
 Deprived of such a wife ? Hence I renounce
 The feast, the cheerful guest, the flowery wreath, 350
 And song that used to echo through my house ;
 For never will I touch the lyre again,
 Nor to the Libyan flute's sweet measures raise
 My voice : with thee all my delights are dead.
 Thy beauteous figure, by the artist's hand 355
 Skilfully wrought, shall in my bed be laid ;
 By that reclining, I will clasp it to me,
 And call it by thy name, and think I hold
 My dear wife in my arms, and have her yet,
 Though now no more I have her : cold delight, 360
 I ween ; yet thus the affliction of my soul
 Shall I relieve, and visiting my dreams
 Shalt thou delight me ; for to see a friend
 Is grateful to the soul, come when he will,
 Though an unreal vision of the night. 365
 Had I the voice of Orpheus, and his skill,
 Of power to soothe with my melodious strains
 The daughter of bright Ceres, or her husband,
 That from their realms I might receive thee back,
 I would go down ; nor should the infernal dog, 370
 Nor the stern Charon, sitting at his oar
 To waft the dead, restrain me, till thy life
 I had restored to the fair light of day.
 But there await me till I die ; prepare
 A mansion for me, as again with me 375
 To dwell ; for in thy tomb will I be laid
 In the same cedar, by thy side composed ;

For ev'n in death I will not be disjoin'd
From thee, who hast alone been faithful to me.

CHO. For her dear sake thy sorrows will I share
As friend with friend ; and she is worthy of it. 381

ALC. You hear, my children, what your father's
words

Have promised ; not to wed another woman
To your discomfort, nor dishonor me.

ADM. I now repeat it : firm shall be my faith. 385

ALC. On this, receive thy children from my hands.

ADM. A much-loved gift, and from a much-loved
hand.

ALC. Be now, instead of me, a mother to them.

ADM. If they lose thee, it must indeed be so.

ALC. When I should live, I sink among the dead.

ADM. Ah me, what shall I do, bereft of thee ! 391

ALC. Time will abate thy grief : the dead is nothing.

ADM. O lead me, by the gods, lead me down with
thee.

ALC. Enough, it is enough that I die for thee. 394

ADM. O fate, of what a wife dost thou deprive me !

ALC. A heavy weight hangs on my darken'd eye.

ADM. If thou forsake me, I am lost indeed.

ALC. As one that is no more I now am nothing.

ADM. Ah, raise thy face : do not forsake thy chil-
dren. 399

ALC. It must be so perforce : farewell, my children.

ADM. Look on them but a look.

ALC. I am no more.

ADM. How dost thou ? Wilt thou leave us then ?

ALC. Farewell.

ADM. And what a wretch, what a lost wretch am I !

CHO. She 's gone ; thy wife, Admetus, is no more.

EUM. O my unhappy fate ! 405

My mother sinks to the dark realms of night,
Nor longer views this golden light ;

But to the ills of life exposed
 Leaves my poor orphan state.
 Her eyes, my father, see, her eyes are closed, 410
 And her hand nerveless falls.
 Yet hear me, O my mother, hear my cries ;
 It is thy son that calls,
 Who prostrate on the earth breathes on thy lips his
 sighs.

ADM. On one that hears not, sees not : I and you
 Must bend beneath affliction's heaviest load. 416

EUM. Ah, she hath left my youth :
 My mother, my dear mother, is no more ;
 Left me my sufferings to deplore.
 Who shall my sorrows soothe ? 420
 Thou too, my sister, thy full share shalt know
 Of grief, thy heart to rend.
 Vain, O my father, vain thy nuptial vows,
 Brought to this speedy end ; 424
 For, when my mother died, in ruin sunk thy house.

CHO. Admetus, thou perforce must bear these ills :
 Thou art not the first, nor shalt thou be the last
 Of mortal men, to lose a virtuous wife :
 For know, death is a debt we all must pay.

ADM. I know it well : not unawares this ill 430
 Falls on me ; I foresaw, and mourn'd it long.
 But I will bear the body hence : attend ;
 And, whilst you wait, raise with alternate voice
 The pæan to the ruthless god that rules
 Below : and through my realms of Thessaly 435
 I give command that all in solemn grief
 For this dear woman shear their locks, and wear
 The sable garb of mourning ; from your steeds,

438 The Grecians are supposed to have adopted the custom
 of cutting off the manes of horses in solemn mournings, from
 the Persians.

Whether in pairs they whirl the car, or bear
 Single the rider's rein, their waving manes 440
 Cut close: nor through the city be the sound
 Of flute or lyre for twelve revolving moons.
 Never shall I entomb one dearer to me,
 Or one more kind: these honors from my hands
 She merits, for she only died for me. 445

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Immortal bliss be thine,
 Daughter of Pelias, in the realms below;
 Immortal pleasures round thee flow,
 Though never there the sun's bright beams shall
 shine.
 Be the black-brow'd Pluto told, 450
 And the Stygian boatman old,
 Whose rude hands grasp the oar, the rudder guide,
 The dead conveying o'er the tide,—
 Let him be told, so rich a freight before
 His light skiff never bore: 455
 Tell him, that o'er the joyless lakes
 The noblest of her sex her dreary passage takes.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Thy praise the bards shall tell,
 When to their hymning voice the echo rings;
 Or when they sweep the solemn strings, 460
 And wake to rapture the seven-chorded shell;
 Or in Sparta's jocund bowers,
 Circling when the vernal hours

464 A festival instituted to Carnean Apollo, and celebrated in the month of April by most of the cities of Greece, but particularly Sparta. At this festival the musical numbers, called 'Carnean songs,' were sung by musicians, who contended for victory.

Bring the Carnean feast; whilst through the night
 Full-orb'd the high moon rolls her light; 465
 Or where rich Athens, proudly elevate,
 Shows her magnific state:
 Their voice thy glorious death shall raise,
 And swell the enraptured strain to celebrate thy praise.

STROPHE II.

O, that I had the power, 470
 Could I but bring thee from the shades of night
 Again to view this golden light,
 To leave that boat, to leave that dreary shore,
 Where Cocytus deep and wide
 Rolls along his sullen tide! 475
 For thou, O best of women, thou alone
 For thy lord's life daredst give thy own.
 Light lie the earth upon that gentle breast,
 And be thou ever bless'd!
 But should he choose to wed again, 480
 Mine and thy children's hearts would hold him in dis-
 dain.

ANTISTROPHE II.

When, to avert his doom,
 His mother in the earth refused to lie;
 Nor would his ancient father die
 To save his son from an untimely tomb; 485
 Though the hand of time had spread
 Hoar hairs o'er each aged head;
 In youth's fresh bloom, in beauty's radiant glow,
 The darksome way thou daredst to go,
 And for thy youthful lord's to give thy life. 490
 Be mine so true a wife,
 Though rare the lot: then should I prove
 The indissoluble bond of faithfulness and love.

HERCULES, CHORUS.

HER. Ye strangers, citizens of Pheræ, say
If I shall find Admetus in the house. 496

CHO. There is the son of Pheres, Hercules.
But what occasion, tell us, brought thee hither
To Thessaly? to Pheræ why this visit?

HER. A toil imposed by the Tirynthian king.

CHO. And whither roving? On what journey bound?

HER. For the four steeds that whirl the Thracian's
car. 501

CHO. How to be won? Art thou a stranger there?

HER. A stranger, never on Bistonian ground.

CHO. These horses are not won without strong contest.

HER. The toil, whate'er it be, I could not shun. 505

CHO. He must be slain, or death awaits thee there.

HER. Not the first contest this I have essay'd.

CHO. Shouldst thou o'ercome their lord, what is
the prize?

HER. His coursers to Eurystheus I shall lead.

CHO. No slight task in their mouths to place the
curb. 510

HER. I shall, though from their nostrils they breathe
fire.

CHO. With their fierce jaws they rend the flesh of
men.

HER. So feeds the mountain savage, not the horse.

CHO. Their mangers shalt thou see all stain'd with
blood.

HER. From whom does he that bred them draw his
race? 515

CHO. From Mars this king of golden-shielded
Thrace.

HER. How is this toil assign'd me by my fate,
In enterprise so hazardous and high

Engaged, that always with the sons of Mars
 I must join battle! With Lycaon first, 520
 With Cygnus next; now with these furious steeds,
 And their proud lord, another contest waits me :
 But never shall Alcmena's son be seen
 To tremble at the fierceness of a foe.

CHO. But, see, the sceptred ruler of this land, 525
 Admetus, from his house advances to thee.

ADMETUS, HERCULES, CHORUS.

ADM. Hail, son of Jove, of Perseus' noble blood.

HER. Hail thou, Admetus, king of Thessaly.

ADM. I am no stranger to thy friendly wishes. 529

HER. Why are thy locks in sign of mourning shorn?

ADM. 'Tis for one dead, whom I must this day bury.

HER. The god avert thy mourning for a child!

ADM. My children, what I had, live in my house.

HER. Thy aged father, haply he is gone. 534

ADM. My father lives, and she that bore me lives.

HER. Lies then thy wife Alcestis 'mongst the dead?

ADM. Of her I have in double wise to speak.

HER. As of the living speak'st thou, or the dead?

ADM. She is, and is no more: this grief afflicts me.

HER. This gives no information: dark thy words.

ADM. Know'st thou not then the destiny assign'd
 her? 541

HER. I know that she submits to die for thee.

ADM. To this assenting is she not no more?

HER. Lament her not too soon; await the time.

ADM. She's dead; one soon to die is now no more.

521 Cygnus resided in Thessaly near the sea-coast, and used to oblige every person who travelled that way, or whom ill fortune brought on shore, to contend with him; and his ambition was to be able, with the skulls of the victims which he slew, to build a temple to Apollo. Of Lycaon we have no account in history.

HER. It differs wide to be, or not to be. 546

ADM. Such are thy sentiments, far other mine.

HER. But wherefore are thy tears? What friend is dead?

ADM. A woman; of a woman made I mention.

HER. Of foreign birth, or one allied to thee? 550

ADM. Of foreign birth, but to my house most dear.

HER. How in thy house then did she chance to die?

ADM. Her father dead, she came an orphan hither.

HER. Would I had found thee with no grief oppress'd!

ADM. With what intent dost thou express thee thus?

HER. To seek some other hospitable hearth. 556

ADM. Not so, O king; come not so great an ill.

HER. To those that mourn, a guest is troublesome.

ADM. Dead are the dead: but enter thou my house.

HER. Shame that with those who weep a guest should feast. 560

ADM. We have apartments separate, to receive thee.

HER. Permit me to depart, much will I thank thee.

ADM. It must not be: no, to another house

Thou must not turn aside.—Go thou before;

Ope those apartments of the house which bear 565

A different aspect; give command to those,

Whose charge it is, to spread the plenteous table,

And bar the doors between: the voice of wo

Unseemly heard afflicts the feasting guest.

CHO. What wouldst thou do, Admetus? Such a grief 570

Now lying heavy on thee, canst thou bear

To admit a guest? Doth this bespeak thee wise?

ADM. If from my house or city I should drive

A coming guest, wouldst thou commend me more?

Thou wouldst not: my affliction would not thus 575
be less, but more unhospitable I;

And to my former ills this farther ill
 Be added ; I should hear my mansion call'd
 The stranger-hating house. Besides, to me
 His hospitable doors are always open, 580
 Whene'er I tread the thirsty soil of Argos.

CHO. Why didst thou then conceal thy present
 grief,

A stranger friend arriving, as thou say'st ?

ADM. My gate he would not enter, had he known
 Of my affliction aught : yet acting thus, 585
 Some may perchance deem me unwise, nor hold me
 Worthy of praise ; yet never shall my house
 Know to dishonor or reject a guest.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Yes, liberal house, with princely state
 To many a stranger, many a guest, 590
 Oft hast thou oped thy friendly gate,
 Oft spread the hospitable feast.
 Beneath thy roof Apollo deign'd to dwell,
 Here strung his silver-sounding shell ;
 And, mixing with thy menial train, 595
 Deign'd to be call'd the shepherd of the plain :
 And, as he drove his flocks along,
 Whether the winding vale they rove,
 Or linger in the upland grove,
 He tuned the pastoral pipe, or rural song. 600

ANTISTROPHE I.

Delighted with thy tuneful lay,
 No more the savage thirsts for blood ;
 Amidst thy flocks, in harmless play,
 Wantons the lynx's spotted brood ;
 Pleased from his lair, on Othrys' rugged brow, 605
 The lion *seeks* the vale below ;

Whilst to thy lyre's melodious sound
 The dappled hinds in sportive measures bound ;
 And, as the vocal echo rings,
 Lightly their nimble feet they ply, 610
 Leaving their pine-clad forests high,
 Charm'd with the sweet notes of thy gladdening strings.

STROPHE II.

Hence is thy house, Admetus, graced
 With all that Plenty's hand bestows,
 Near the sweet-streaming current placed 615
 That from the lake of Bœbia flows.
 Far to the west extends the wide domain,
 Rich-pastured mead, and cultured plain ;
 Its bound, the dark Molossian air,
 Where the sun stations his unharness'd car ; 620
 And, stretching to his eastern ray,
 Where Pelion, rising in his pride,
 Frowns o'er the Ægean's portless tide,
 Reaches from sea to sea thy ample sway.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Yet wilt thou ope thy gate ev'n now, 625
 Ev'n now wilt thou receive this guest ;
 Though from thine eye the warm tear flow,
 Though sorrow rend thy suffering breast :
 Sad tribute to thy wife, who new in death
 Lamented lies thy roof beneath. 630
 But Nature thus her laws decreed :
 The generous mind is prompt to generous deed ;
 For all the power of wisdom lies
 Fix'd in the righteous bosom : hence
 My soul assumes this confidence ; 635
 Fair to the virtuous shall success arise.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ye citizens of Phœæ, present here

Benevolent to me, my dead adorn'd
 With every honor, the attendant train
 Are bearing to the tomb and funeral pyre. 640
 Do you, (for ancient usage so requires,)
 Address her, as she takes her last sad way.

CHO. Thy father Pheres, see, his aged foot
 Advances : his attendants in their hands
 Bear gorgeous presents, honors to the dead. 645

PHERES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

PHE. I come, my son, joint sufferer in thy griefs ;
 For thou hast lost a good and virtuous wife,
 None will gainsay it ; but thou must perforce
 Endure this, though severe. These ornaments
 Receive, and let her go beneath the earth : 650
 These honors are her due ; since for thy life
 She died, my son ; nor would she I should be
 Childless, nor suffer'd me, bereft of thee,
 To waste in grief my sad remains of life.
 The life of all her sex hath she adorn'd 655
 With added lustre by this generous deed.
 O thou, that hast preserved my son, and raised
 Our sinking glories, hail ! ev'n in the house
 Of Pluto be thou bless'd ! Such marriages
 Pronounce I good ; others of little worth. 660

ADM. Thou comest not to these obsequies by me
 Invited, nor thy presence do I deem
 Friendly. She never in thy ornaments
 Shall be array'd, nor wants she aught of thine
 To grace her funeral rites. Then was the time 665
 To show thy social sorrow, when my life
 The Fates demanded : thou couldst stand aloof,
 Old as thou art, and give a younger up
 To die ; and wouldst thou now bewail her death ?
 Art thou my father ? No ; nor she, who says 670

She brought me forth, my mother, though so call'd ;
 But, the base offspring of some slave, thy wife
 Stole me, and put me to her breast. Thy deeds
 Show what thou art by plain and evident proof:
 And never can I deem myself thy son, 675
 Who passest all in mean and abject spirit :
 At such an age, just trembling on the verge
 Of life, thou wouldst not, nay, thou daredst not die
 For thine own son : but you could suffer her,
 Though sprung from foreign blood : with justice then
 Her only as my father must I deem, 681
 Her only as my mother ; yet this course
 Mightst thou have run with glory, for thy son
 Daring to die : brief was the space of life
 That could remain to thee ; I then had lived 685
 My destined time, she too had lived ; nor thus
 Of her forsaken, should I wail my loss.
 Yet all, that makes man happy, hadst thou proved,
 Bless'd through thy life : in royalty thy youth
 Grew up : I was thy son to inherit from thee 690
 Thy treasures ; that not childless hadst thou died,
 Leaving thy desolated house a prey
 To plundering strangers. Neither canst thou say
 Thou gavest me up to death as one that held
 Thy age in rude contempt ; I honor'd thee 695
 With holy reverence, requited thus
 By thee, and her that bore me. Other sons
 Wilt thou not therefore speed thee to beget,
 To cherish thy old age, to grace thee dead
 With sumptuous vest, and lay thee in the tomb ? 700
 That office never shall my hand perform,
 For, far as in thee lay, I died : if yet
 I view this light, fortune presenting me
 Other deliverer, his son I am,
 With pious fondness to support his age. 705

Unmeaning is the old man's wish to die,
 Of age complaining and life's lengthen'd course ;
 For, at the advance of death, none has the will
 To die ; old age is no more grievous to them.

CHO. Forbear ; enough the present weight of wo :
 My son, exasperate not a father's mind. 711

PHE. Me as some worthless Lydian dost thou rate,
 My son, or Phrygian slave bought with thy gold ?
 Dost thou not know I am Thessalian born,
 Of a Thessalian father, truly free ? 715

Opprobrious are thy words, reviling me
 With youthful insolence, not quitted so.
 I gave thee birth, thence lord of my fair house ;
 I gave thee nurture, that indeed I owed thee ;
 But not to die for thee : such law from nature 720

Received I not, that fathers for their sons
 Should die, nor does Greece know it. For thyself,
 Whether misfortune press thee, or thy state
 Be happier, thou wast born : thou hast from me
 Whate'er behoves thee ; o'er an ample realm 725

Thou now art king, and I shall leave thee more
 A large extent of lands ; for from my father
 These I received : in what then have I wrong'd thee,
 Or what deprived thee ? Die not thou for me,
 Nor I for thee. Is it to thee a joy 730

To view the light of heaven, and dost thou think
 Thy father joys not in it ? Long I deem
 The time below, but little is the space
 Of life, yet pleasant. Thou, devoid of shame,
 Hast struggled not to die, and thou dost live 735

Passing the bounds of life assign'd by fate,
 By killing her. My mean and abject spirit
 Thou dost rebuke, O thou most timid wretch,
 Vanquish'd ev'n by a woman, who for thee,
 Her young and beauteous husband, freely died, 740

A fine device that thou mightst never die,
 Couldst thou persuade who at the time might be
 Thy wife to die for thee ; yet canst thou load
 Thy friends with vile reproach, if they decline
 To do it, base and timid as thou art. 745
 But hold thy peace ; and think, if life be dear
 To thee, it must be dear to all. On us
 If thou wilt throw reproaches, thou shalt bear
 Enough of thy ill deeds, and nothing false.

CHO. Too much of ill already hath been spoken :
 Forbear, old man, nor thus revile thy son. 751

ADM. Say what thou wilt, I have declared my
 thoughts :
 But if it gives thee pain to hear the truth,
 Much it behoved thee not to wrong me thus.

PHE. Had I died for thee, greater were the wrong.

ADM. Is death alike then to the young and old ? 756

PHE. With one life ought we live, and not with two.

ADM. Mayst thou then live a greater age than Jove !

PHE. And dost thou, nothing injured, curse thy pa-
 rents ?

ADM. I saw thee fondly coveting long life. 760

PHE. Her, that died for thee, wilt thou not entomb ?

ADM. These are the tokens of thy abject spirit.

PHE. By us she died not ; that thou wilt not say.

ADM. Ah, mayst thou some time come to want my
 aid ! 764

PHE. Wed many wives, that more may die for thee.

ADM. On thee be that reproach ; thou wouldst not die.

PHE. Sweet is this light of heaven, sweet is this
 light.

ADM. Base is thy thought, unworthy of a man.

PHE. Would it not joy thee to entomb my age ?

ADM. Die when thou wilt, inglorious wilt thou die.

PHE. An ill report will not affect me dead. 771

ADM. Alas, alas, how shameless is old age !

PHE. She was not shameless, but thou found'st her mad.

ADM. Begone, and suffer me to entomb the dead.

PHE. I go : thou shalt entomb her, as thyself 775
Her murderer ; look for vengeance from her friends.
Acastus is no man, if his hand fails
Dearly to avenge on thee his sister's blood.

ADM. Why get thee gone, thou and thy worthy wife ;
Grow old together, as you well deserve, 780
Childless, your son yet living ; never more
Meet we beneath this roof. Go ; were it decent
To interdict thee by the herald's voice,
I would forbid thee ever set thy foot
Within this mansion of thy ancestors. 785
But let us go, since we must bear our ill,
And place her body on the funeral pyre.

CHO. O thou unhappy, nobly-daring woman,
Most generous, brightest excellence, farewell ;
Courteous may Hermes and the infernal king 790
Receive thee : in those realms, if aught of grace
Awaits the virtuous, be those honors thine,
And be thy seat nigh Pluto's royal bride.

ATTENDANT.

To many a guest ere now, from various realms
Arriving, in this mansion have I spread 795
The hospitable feast ; but at this hearth
A viler than this stranger never shared
The bounty of Admetus : though he saw
My lord oppress'd with grief, it check'd him not ;
He boldly enter'd, nor with sober cheer 800
Took the refreshment offer'd, though he knew
The affliction of the house : if what he would
We brought not on the instant, he enforced

His harsh commands ; and grasping in his hands
 A goblet wreathed with ivy, fill'd it high 805
 With the grape's purple juice, and quaff'd it off
 Untemper'd, till the glowing wine inflamed him ;
 Then, binding round his head a myrtle wreath,
 Howls dismal discord : two unpleasing strains
 We heard, his harsh notes, who in naught revered 810
 The afflictions of Admetus, and the voice
 Of sorrow through the family that wept
 Our mistress: yet our tearful eyes we show'd not
 (Admetus so commanded) to the guest.
 My office bids me wait, and in the house 815
 Receive this stranger, some designing knave,
 Or ruffian robber : she meantime is borne
 Out of the house, nor did I follow her,
 Nor stretch'd my hand lamenting my lost mistress :
 She was a mother to me, and to all 820
 My fellow servants ; from a thousand ills
 She saved us, with her gentleness appeasing
 Our lord when angry : justly do I hate
 This stranger then, who came amidst our grief.

HERCULES, ATTENDANT.

HER. You fellow, why that grave and thoughtful
 look ? 825
 Ill it becomes a servant's countenance
 To frown on strangers, whom he should receive
 With cheerfulness. A good friend of thy lord
 Is present : all the welcome he can get
 From thee, a sullen and contracted brow, 830
 Mourning a loss that touches not this house.
 Come hither, that thou mayst be wiser, friend :
 Know'st thou the nature of all mortal things ?
 Not thou, I ween ; how shouldst thou ? hear from me :
 By all of human race death is a debt 835

That must be paid ; and none of mortal men
 Knows whether till to-morrow life's short space
 Shall be extended : such the dark events
 Of fortune ; never to be learn'd, nor traced
 By any skill : instructed thus by me, 840
 Bid pleasure welcome, drink, the life allow'd
 From day to day esteem thine own, all else
 Fortune's. To Venus chief address thy vows ;
 Of all the heavenly powers, she, gentle queen,
 Kindest to man, and sweetest ; all besides 845
 Reckless let pass, and listen to my words,
 If thou seest reason in them, as I think
 Thou dost : then bid excessive grief farewell,
 And drink with us ; master these present ills,
 And bind thy brows with garlands : well I know 850
 The circling bowl will waft thy spirits to bliss,
 Now sunk in dark and sullen melancholy.
 Since we are mortal, be our minds intent
 On mortal things ; to all the grave, whose brows
 With cares are furrow'd, (let me judge for thee,) 855
 Life is no life, but a calamity.

ATT. These things we know ; but what becomes us
 NOW

854 Tragedy has here descended from her elevation, and vouchsafed to borrow a grace from Comedy. Hercules, observing the gloomy countenance of the attendant, who ought to have entertained him with a festive cheerfulness, and supposing that his grief arose from a trivial cause, comes forth, and rallies him in the true Epicurean spirit : not that these are his real sentiments ; the high adventure which he had undertaken, and the conclusion of the scene, show the contrary. The whole was intended as a good-humored rebuke to the slave for his unseasonable melancholy, which had something inhospitable in it ; and this perfectly consistent with manners, time, and place : it gives some relief to the solemn gloom around, and is finely contrasted by that noble resolution in which he reassumes the hero, and shows himself the genuine son of Jupiter.

Ill suits with festal revelry and mirth.

HER. A woman dies, one unrelated ; check
Thy grief : the lords of this fair mansion live. 860

ATT. Live ! Know'st thou not the afflictions of this
house?

HER. Unless thy lord in something hath deceived me.

ATT. Liberal his mind, too liberal to the guest.

HER. No ; for a stranger dead he hath done well.

ATT. No stranger, but a near domestic loss. 865

HER. Is it some sorrow which he told not me ?

ATT. Go thou with joy ; ours are our lord's afflictions.

HER. These are not words that speak a foreign loss.

ATT. If such, thy revelry had not displeased me.

HER. Then by my friendly host I much am wrong'd.

ATT. Thy coming was unseasonable ; this house 871
Wanted no guest : thou seest our locks all shorn,
Our grief and sable vests.

HER. Who then is dead ?

One of his children, or his aged father ?

ATT. His wife Alcestis, stranger, is no more. 875

HER. What say'st thou ? And ev'n so could you
receive me ?

ATT. It shamed him to reject thee from his house.

HER. O wretch, of what a wife art thou bereft !

ATT. Not she alone, we all are lost with her.

HER. I might have thought this when I saw his eye
Flowing with tears, his locks shorn off, and grief 881
Mark'd on his face ; but he persuaded me,
Saying that one of foreign birth he mourn'd,
And bore her to the tomb : unwillingly
Entering these gates I feasted in the house, 885
My hospitable friend with such a grief
Oppress'd ; nay, more, I revelled, and my head
With garlands shaded : but the fault was thine,
Who didst not tell me that a wo like this

Thy house afflicted. But inform me where 890
She is interr'd; where shall I find her tomb?

ATT. Right in the way that to Larissa leads,
Without the city, wilt thou find her tomb.

HER. Now my firm heart, and thou, my daring soul,
Show what a son the daughter of Electryon, 895
Alcmena of Tirynthia, bore to Jove.

This lady, new in death, behoves me save,
And, to Admetus rendering grateful service,
Restore his lost Alcestis to his house.
This sable-vested tyrant of the dead 900

My eye shall watch, not without hope to find him
Drinking the oblations nigh the tomb. If once,
Seen from my secret stand, I rush upon him,
These arms shall grasp him till his panting sides
Labor for breath; and who shall force him from me,
Till he gives back this woman? Should I fail 906
To seize him there, as coming not to taste
The spilt blood's thickening foam, I will descend
To the drear house of Pluto and his queen,
Which the sun never cheers, and beg her thence; 910
Assured that I shall lead her back, and place her
In my friend's hands, whose hospitable heart
Received me in his house, nor made excuse,
Though pierced with such a grief; this he conceal'd
Through generous thought, and reverence to his
friend. 915

Who in Thessalia bears a warmer love
To strangers? Who, through all the realms of
Greece?

It never shall be said this generous man
Received in me a base and worthless wretch.

ADMETUS, CHORUS.

ADM. Ah me! Ah me! How mournful this approach!

How hateful to my sight this widow'd house ! 921
 Ah, whither shall I go? where shall I rest?
 What shall I say, or what forbear to say?
 How may I sink beneath this weight of wo?
 To misery was I born; wretch that I am, 925
 I envy now the dead, I long for them,
 Long to repose me in that house. No more
 With pleasure shall I view the sun's fair beams,
 No more with pleasure walk upon this earth;
 So dear an hostage death has rent from me, 930
 And yielded to the infernal king his prey.

CHO. Go forward, yet go forward; to thy house
 Retire.

ADM. Ah me!

CHO. Thy sufferings do indeed
 Demand these groans.

ADM. O miserable me!

CHO. Thy steps are set in sorrow, well I know, 935
 But all thy sorrow naught avails the dead.

ADM. Wretch that I am!

CHO. To see thy wife no more,
 No more to see her face, is grief indeed.

ADM. O, thou hast touch'd on that, which deepest
 wounds

My mind: what greater ill can fall on man, 940
 Than of a faithful wife to be deprived?
 O that I ne'er had wedded, in the house
 Had ne'er dwelt with her! The unmarried state
 I envy, and deem those supremely bless'd
 Who have no children: in one single life 945
 To mourn, is pain that may be well endured:
 To see our children wasting with disease,
 To see death ravaging our nuptial bed,
 This is not to be borne, when we might pass
Our lives without a child, without a wife. 950

CHO. Fate comes, resistless Fate.

ADM. Unhappy me !

CHO. But to thy sorrows wilt thou put no bounds ?

ADM. Wo, wo, wo, wo !

CHO. A ponderous weight indeed
To bear ; yet bear them. Thou art not the first
That lost a wife : Misery, in different forms 955
To different men appearing, seizes all.

ADM. Ye lasting griefs, ye sorrows for our friends
Beneath the earth !—Ah, why did ye restrain me ?
I would have cast myself into the tomb,
The gaping tomb, and lain in death with her, 960
The dearest, best of women ; there for one
Pluto hath coupled two most faithful souls,
Together passing o'er the infernal lake.

CHO. I had a friend, by birth allied to me,
Whose son, and such a son as claim'd his tears, 965
Died in the prime of youth, his only child ;
Yet with the firmness of a man he bore
His grief, though childless, and declining age
Led him with hasty steps to hoary hairs.

ADM. Thou goodly mansion, how shall I endure
To enter thee, how dwell beneath thy roof, 971
My state thus sunk ! Ah me, how changed from that,
When 'midst the pines of Pelion blazing round,
And hymeneal hymns, I held my way,
And led my loved Alcestis by her hand ! 975
The festal train with many a cheerful shout
Saluted her, now dead, and me, and hail'd
Our union happy, as descended each
From generous blood and high-born ancestry.
Now for the nuptial song, the voice of wo ; 980
For gorgeous robes, this black and mournful garb
Attends me to my halls, and to my couch,
Where solitary sorrow waits me now.

CHO. This sorrow came upon thee 'midst a state
 Of happiness ; a stranger thou to ills : 985
 Yet is thy life preserved ; thy wife is dead,
 Leaving thy love : is there aught new in this ?
 Many hath Death reft of their wives before.

ADM. My friends, I deem the fortune of my
 wife
 Happier than mine, though otherwise it seems ; 990
 For never more shall sorrow touch her breast,
 And she with glory rests from various ills :
 But I, who ought not live, my destined hour
 O'erpassing, shall drag on a mournful life,
 Late taught what sorrow is. How shall I bear 995
 To enter here ? To whom shall I address
 My speech ? Whose greeting renders my return
 Delightful ? Which way shall I turn ? Within,
 In lonely sorrow shall I waste away,
 As widow'd of my wife I see my couch, 1000
 The seats deserted where she sat, the rooms
 Wanting her elegance. Around my knees
 My children hang, and weep their mother lost :
 These too lament their mistress now no more.
 This is the scene of misery in my house : 1005
 Abroad, the nuptials of Thessalia's youth,
 And the bright circles of assembled dames
 Will but augment my grief: ne'er shall I bear
 To see the loved companions of my wife :
 And if one hates me, he will say, ' Behold 1010
 The man, who basely lives, who dared not die ;
 But giving, through the meanness of his soul,
 His wife, avoided death, yet would be deem'd
 A man : he hates his parents, yet himself
 Had not the spirit to die.' These ill reports 1015
 Cleave to me : why then wish for longer life,
 On evil tongues thus fallen, and evil days ?

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

My venturous foot delights
 To tread the Muses' arduous heights :
 Their hallow'd haunts I love to explore, 1020
 And listen to their lore :
 Yet never could my searching mind
 Aught, like Necessity, resistless find :
 No herb, of sovereign power to save,
 Whose virtues Orpheus joy'd to trace, 1025
 And wrote them in the rolls of Thrace ;
 Nor all that Phœbus gave,
 Instructing the Asclepian train,
 When various ills the human frame assail,
 To heal the wound, to soothe the pain, 1030
 'Gainst her stern force avail.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Of all the powers divine
 Alone none dares approach her shrine ;
 To her no hallow'd image stands,
 No altar she commands ; 1035
 In vain the victim's blood would flow ;
 She never deigns to hear the suppliant vow.
 Never to me mayst thou appear,
 Dread goddess, with severer mien,
 That oft, in life's past tranquil scene, 1040
 Thou hast been known to wear.

1025 It is conjectured that Euripides here alludes to the books which were in his time ascribed to Orpheus, who, besides his wonderful skill in music, was supposed to be the inventor of religious ceremonies, propitiations, and medicine.

1028 The god Esculapius was also called Asclepius: hence 'the Asclepian train' of our poet.

By thee Jove works his stern behest :
 Thy force subdues ev'n Scythia's stubborn steel ;
 Nor ever does thy rugged breast
 The touch of pity feel. 1045

STROPHE II.

And now, with ruin pleased,
 On thee, O king, her hands have seized,
 And bound thee in her iron chain :
 Yet her fell force sustain ;
 For from the gloomy realms of night 1050
 No tears recall the dead to life's sweet light.
 No virtue, though to heaven allied,
 Saves from the inevitable doom :
 Heroes and sons of gods have died,
 And sunk into the tomb. 1055
 Dear, whilst our eyes her presence bless'd ;
 Dear, in the gloomy mansions of the dead :
 Most generous she, the noblest, best,
 Who graced thy nuptial bed.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Thy wife's sepulchral mound 1060
 Deem not as common, worthless ground,
 That swells their breathless bodies o'er,
 Who die, and are no more.
 No : be it honor'd as a shrine
 Raised high, and hallow'd to some power divine. 1065
 The traveller, as he passes by,
 Shall thither bend his devious way ;
 With reverence gaze, and with a sigh
 Smite on his breast, and say,
 ' She died of old to save her lord ; 1070
 Now bless'd among the bless'd. Hail, power revered ;
 To us thy wonted grace afford !'
 Such vows shall be preferr'd.

But see, Admetus, to thy house, I ween,
Alcmena's son bends his returning steps. 1075

HERCULES, ADMETUS, CHORUS.

HER. I would speak freely to my friend, Adme-
tus,

Nor what I blame keep secret in my breast.
I came to thee amidst thy ills, and thought
I had been worthy to be proved thy friend.
Thou told'st me not the obsequies prepared 1080
Were for thy wife, but in thy house receivedst me
As if thou grievedst for one of foreign birth.
I bound my head with garlands, to the gods
Pouring libations in thy house with grief
Oppress'd. I blame this : yes, in such a state 1085
I blame this : yet I come not in thine ills
To give thee pain ; why I return, in brief
Will I unfold. This woman from my hands
Receive to thy protection, till return'd
I bring the Thracian steeds, having there slain 1090
The proud Bistonian tyrant : should I fail,
(Be that mischance not mine, for much I wish
Safe to revisit thee ; yet should I fail)
I give her to the safeguard of thy house ;
For with much toil she came into my hands. 1095
To such as dare contend, some public games,
Which well deserved my toil, I found proposed ;
I bring her thence, she is the prize of conquest :
For slight assays each victor led away
A courser ; but for those of harder proof 1100
The conqueror was rewarded from the herd,
And with some female graced : victorious there,
A prize so noble it were base to slight.
Take her to thy protection, not by stealth
Obtain'd, but the reward of many toils : 1105

The time perchance may come when thou wilt thank me.

ANM. Not that I slight thy friendship, or esteem thee
 Other than noble, wish'd I to conceal
 My wife's unhappy fate ; but to my grief
 It had been added grief, if thou hadst sought 1110
 Elsewhere the rites of hospitality :
 Suffice it that I mourn ills which are mine.
 This woman, if it may be, give in charge,
 I beg thee, king, to some Thessalian else,
 That hath not cause like me to grieve : in Pheræ 1115
 Thou mayst find many friends ; call not my woes
 Fresh to my memory ; never in my house
 Could I behold her, but my tears would flow :
 To sorrow add not sorrow ; now enough
 I sink beneath its weight. Where should her youth
 With me be guarded ? for her gorgeous vests 1121
 Proclaim her young. If, mixing with the men,
 She dwell beneath my roof, how shall her fame,
 Conversing with the youths, be kept unsullied ?
 It is not easy to restrain the warmth 1125
 Of that intemperate age : my care for thee
 Warns me of this. Or if, from them removed,
 I hide her in the apartments late my wife's,
 How to my bed admit her ? I should fear
 A double blame : my citizens would scorn me 1130
 As light, and faithless to the kindest wife
 That died for me, if to her bed I took
 Another blooming bride ; and to the dead
 Behoves me pay the highest reverence
 Due to her merit. And thou, lady, know, 1135
 Whoe'er thou art, that form, that shape, that air
 Resembles my Alcestis. By the gods,
 Remove her from my sight ; it is too much,
 I cannot bear it : when I look on her,

Methinks I see my wife ; this wounds my heart, 1140
And calls the tears fresh gushing from my eyes.
This is the bitterness of grief indeed.

CHO. I cannot praise thy fortune ; but behoves thee
To bear with firmness what the gods assign.

HER. O that from Jove I had the power to bring
Back from the mansions of the dead thy wife 1146
To heaven's fair light, that grace achieving for thee !

ADM. I know thy friendly will : but how can this
Be done ? The dead return not to this light.

HER. Check then thy swelling griefs ; with reason
rule them. 1150

ADM. How easy to advise, but hard to bear !

HER. What would it profit shouldst thou always
groan ?

ADM. I know it ; but I am in love with grief.

HER. Love to the dead calls forth the ceaseless tear.

ADM. O, I am wretched more than words can speak.

HER. A good wife hast thou lost ; who can gainsay
it ? 1156

ADM. Never can life be pleasant to me more.

HER. Thy sorrow now is new ; time will abate it.

ADM. Time, say'st thou ? Yes, the time that brings
me death.

HER. Some young and lovely bride will bid it cease.

ADM. No more : what say'st thou ? Never could I
think—— 1161

HER. Wilt thou still lead a lonely, widow'd life ?

ADM. Never shall other woman share my bed.

HER. And think'st thou this will aught avail the
dead ?

ADM. This honor is her due, where'er she be. 1165

HER. This hath my praise, though near allied to
frensy.

ADM. Praise me, or not, I ne'er will wed again.

HER. I praise thee that thou art faithful to thy wife.

ADM. Though dead, if I betray her, may I die!

HER. Well, take this noble lady to thy house. 1170

ADM. No, by thy father Jove let me intreat thee.

HER. Not to do this would be the greatest wrong.

ADM. To do it would with anguish rend my heart.

HER. Let me prevail; this grace may find its meed.

ADM. O that thou never hadst received this prize!

HER. Yet in my victory thou art victor with me. 1176

ADM. 'Tis nobly said: yet let this woman go.

HER. If she must go, she shall: but must she go?

ADM. She must, if I incur not thy displeasure.

HER. There is a cause that prompts my earnest-
ness. 1180

ADM. Thou hast prevail'd, but much against my will.

HER. The time will come when thou wilt thank me
for it.

ADM. Well, if I must receive her, lead her in.

HER. Charge servants with her! No, that must not
be.

ADM. Lead her thyself then, if thy will incline thee.

HER. No, to thy hand alone will I commit her. 1186

ADM. I touch her not; but she hath leave to enter.

HER. I shall intrust her only to thy hand.

ADM. Thou dost constrain me, king, against my will.

HER. Venture to stretch thy hand, and touch the
stranger's. 1190

ADM. I touch her, as I would the headless Gorgon.

HER. Hast thou her hand?

ADM. I have.

HER. Then hold her safe:

Hereafter thou wilt say the son of Jove

Hath been a generous guest. View now her face;

See if she bears resemblance to thy wife; 1195

And thus made happy, bid farewell to grief.

ADM. O gods, what shall I say? 'Tis marvellous,
Exceeding hope. See I my wife indeed,
Or doth some god distract me with false joy?

HER. In very deed dost thou behold thy wife. 1200

ADM. See that it be no phantom from beneath.

HER. Make not thy friend one that evokes the
shades.

ADM. And do I see my wife, whom I entomb'd?

HER. I marvel not that thou art diffident.

ADM. I touch her: may I speak to her as living?

HER. Speak to her; thou hast all thy heart could
wish. 1206

ADM. Dearest of women, do I see again
That face, that person? This exceeds all hope:
I never thought that I should see thee more.

HER. Thou hast her; may no god be envious to
thee! 1210

ADM. O, be thou bless'd, thou generous son of Jove!
Thy father's might protect thee! Thou alone
Hast raised her to me: from the realms below
How hast thou brought her to the light of life?

HER. I fought with him that lords it o'er the shades.

ADM. Where with the gloomy tyrant didst thou
fight? 1216

HER. I lay in wait, and seized him at the tomb.

ADM. But wherefore doth my wife thus speechless
stand?

HER. It is not yet permitted that thou hear
Her voice addressing thee, till from the gods 1220
That rule beneath she be unsanctified
With hallow'd rites, and the third morn return.
But lead her in; and, as thou art just in all
Besides, Admetus, see thou reverence strangers.
Farewell: I go to achieve the destined toil 1225
For the imperial son of Sthenelus.

ADM. Abide with us, and share my friendly hearth.

HER. That time will come again ; this demands speed.

ADM. Success attend thee : safe mayst thou return.

Now to my citizens I give in charge, 1230

And to each chief, that for this bless'd event

They institute the dance, let the steer bleed,

And the rich altars, as they pay their vows,

Breathe incense to the gods ; for now I rise

To better life, and grateful own the blessing. 1235

CHO. With various hand the gods dispense our fates :

Now showering various blessings, which our hopes

Dared not aspire to ; now controlling ills

We deem'd inevitable : thus the god

To these hath given an end exceeding thought. 1240

Such is the fortune of this happy day.

M E D E A.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NURSE.

TUTOR.

SONS of Medea.

MEDEA.

CREON.

JASON.

ÆGEUS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS of Corinthian dames.

M E D E A.

ARGUMENT.

MEDIA, the daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis, becoming enamoured of Jason, is enabled, by her acquaintance with the art of magic, to extricate her lover from all his dangers, and facilitate his acquisition of the celebrated golden fleece. After this conquest, Jason marries his preserver, with whom he elopes, and after some time settles at Corinth. Here, unmindful of his obligations, he is desirous of divorcing his wife, and of contracting a marriage with Glauce, the daughter of king Creon, who, fearing the cruelty and power of Medea, banishes her and her two sons from the country, in order to secure his daughter from her revenge. The unhappy woman, driven to despair by this insult, pretends to submit to the sentence; and, having secured an asylum for herself at Athens, sends her sons with rich presents to the bride; and, by the interposition of Jason, succeeds in obtaining her good offices with the king, to permit the youths to remain at Corinth under the protection of their father. The youths are now sent back to their mother, and Glauce hastens to array herself in the splendid robes presented by her rival; but soon finds that the enchantress has infused a deadly poison, which proves fatal both to herself and her father. Jason, apprehensive of the fate which may await his sons, hastens to their rescue; but finds, on his arrival, that Medea has already sacrificed them as an expiation of the infidelity of her husband, whose agony she derides; and, defying his resentment, flies through the air with her slaughtered children, in a chariot drawn by winged dragons.—[The scene is in the vestibule of the palace of Jason, at Corinth.]

NURSE OF MEDEA.

O, THAT the gallant Argo had not wing'd
 Her course to Colchis through the clashing rocks
 Of the black Euxine ; that in Pelion's groves
 The pine had ne'er been fell'd ; nor at the oars
 The heroes' hands had labor'd when they sought 5
 The golden fleece for Pelias : then my queen,
 Medea, had not plough'd the watery way
 To tower'd Iolcos, maddening with the love
 Of Jason ; nor, the daughters won to slay
 Their father Pelias, had she fix'd her seat 10
 At Corinth, with her husband and her sons ;
 A pleasing flight indeed to those, whose land
 She made her residence ; whilst every thought,
 Studious to aid him, was on Jason fix'd.
 This is the state of firmest happiness, 15
 When from the husband no discordant will
 The wife estranges ; but their dearest ties
 Of love are loosen'd ; all is variance now
 And hate : for Jason, to his children false,
 False to my mistress, for a royal bride 20
 Hath left her couch, and wedded Creon's daughter,
 Lord of this land. Ill doth Medea brook
 This base dishonor : on his oaths she calls,
 Recalls their plighted hands, the firmest pledge
 Of mutual faith, and calls the gods to witness 25
 What a requital she from Jason finds.
 Of food regardless, and in sorrow sunk
 She lies, and melts in tears each tedious hour
 Since first she knew her lord had injured her ;
 Nor lifts her eye, nor lifts her face from the earth, 30

2 The Symplegades were two rocks in the mouth of the Euxine sea, said to meet together with prodigious violence, and crush the passing ships.

Deaf to her friends' intreaties as a rock,
 Or billow of the sea ; save when she turns
 Her snowy neck, and to herself bewails
 Her father, and her country, and her house,
 Which she betray'd to follow this base man, 35
 Who treats her now with such indignity.
 Affliction now hath taught her what it is
 Not to forsake a parent and his house.
 She hates her children, nor with pleasure sees them.
 I fear her, lest she form some strange design ; 40
 For violent her temper, and of wrongs
 Impatient : well I know her, and I fear her,
 Lest, in the dead of night, when all are laid
 In deep repose, she steal into the house,
 And plunge into their breast the piercing sword ; 45
 Or murder ev'n the monarch of the land,
 Or the new-married Jason, on herself
 Drawing severer ills : for like a storm
 Her passions swell ; and he, that dares enrage her,
 Will have small cause to boast his victory. 50
 But see, her sons from the gymnastic ring
 Returning, heedless of their mother's ills ;
 For youth holds no society with grief.

TUTOR with the Sons of Medea, NURSE.

TUT. Thou old domestic servant of my mistress,
 Why dost thou take thy station at the gates, 55
 And ruminate in silence on thy griefs ?
 How hath Medea wish'd to be alone ?

NUR. Thou good old man, attendant on the sons
 Of Jason, faithful servants with their lords
 Suffer in their afflictions, and their hearts 60
 Are touch'd with social sorrow ; and my griefs
 Swell, for Medea's sufferings, to such height,
 That strong desire impell'd me to come forth,

And tell them to the earth and to the skies.

TUT. Admits she yet no respite to her groans? 65

NUR. I wonder at thee : no, these ills but now
Are rising, to their height not yet advanced.

TUT. Unwise, if of our lords we so may speak ;
Since she knows nothing of more recent ills.

NUR. What may this be ? refuse not to inform me.

TUT. Nothing ; and I repent of what I said. 71

NUR. Nay, by this beard, conceal it not from me,
Thy fellow-servant : if occasion calls
For secrecy, in silence will I keep it.

TUT. I heard one say, not seeming to attend, 75
But passing on to where they play with dice,
Amongst the grave old men, who then by chance
Were sitting near Pirene's hallow'd stream,
That Creon, lord of this fair land, will drive
These children, and their mother, from the state 80
Of Corinth : whether this report be true
I know not, but I wish it otherwise.

NUR. Will Jason bear to see his sons thus wrong'd,
Though he regards their mother now no more ?

TUT. To new alliances the old give place, 85
And to this house he is no more a friend.

NUR. Ruin would follow, to the former ill
If this were added ere the first subsides.

TUT. Be cautious then : it were unseasonable
Our queen knew this ; in silence close thy lips. 90

76 Chilon the Lacedæmonian, being sent to Corinth to form an alliance with that state, found the chiefs and elders of the people playing at dice. He therefore returned without executing his commission, declaring that he would not stain the glory of the Spartans with such an infamy, as that they might be said to have contracted an alliance with players at dice.

78 Pirene is a fountain of the purest water, which rises behind the temple of Venus in the ascent of Acrocorinthus, and flows through the city.

NUR. You hear, my children, how your father's
mind

Is towards you : yet I wish not ruin on him ;
He is my lord, though to his friends unkind.

TUT. What mortal knows not—thou mayst know it
hence—

Each for himself conceives a dearer love 95
Than for his neighbor ; some by glory, some
By gain induced : what wonder then, if these,
Of his new nuptials fond, their father love not ?

NUR. Go in, my children, go : all will be well : 99
And take thou heed, keep them aloof, nor let them
Come near their mother whilst her griefs are fresh :
Cruel her eye, and wild ; I mark'd it late,
Expressive of some dark design on these :
Nor will she check her fury, well I know,
Till the storm bursts on some one : may its stroke 105
Fall on some hostile head, not on a friend.

MED. Wretch that I am, what anguish rends my
heart ! [within

Wretched Medea, how art thou undone !

NUR. Ay, thus it is. Your mother, my dear chil-
dren,

Swells with resentment, swells with rage : go in, 110
Go quickly in ; but come not in her eye,
Approach her not, but keep you from the wild
And dreadful fury of her violent temper.
Go now, go quickly in ; this rising cloud
Of grief forbodes a storm, which soon will fall 115
With greater rage : inflamed with injuries,
What will not her tempestuous spirit dare ?

MED. Ah me, ah me, what mighty wrongs I bear,
Wrongs that demand my tears and loud laments !
Ye sons accursed of a detested mother, 120
Perish, together with your father perish,

And in one general ruin sink your house !

NUR. Ah me unhappy ! in their father's fault
 Why make thy sons associates ? Why on them
 Rises thy hatred ? O, I fear, I fear, 125
 My children, lest some evil threatens you.
 Kings have a fiery quality of soul,
 Accustom'd to command : if once they feel
 Control, though small, their anger blazes out,
 Not easily extinguish'd ; hence I deem 130
 An equal mediocrity of life
 More to be wish'd ; if not in gorgeous state,
 Yet without danger glides it on to age.
 There 's a protection in its very name,
 And happiness dwells with it : but the height 135
 Of towering greatness long to mortal man
 Remains not fix'd ; and, when misfortune comes
 Enraged, in deeper ruin sinks the house.

NURSE, CHORUS.

CHO. I heard the voice, I heard the loud laments
 Of the unhappy Colchian : do her griefs 140
 (Say, reverend matron,) find no respite yet ?
 From the door's opening valve I heard her voice.
 No pleasure in the sorrows of your house
 I take ; for deeds are done not grateful to me.

NUR. This is no more a house ; all here is vanish'd,
 Nor leaves a trace behind. The monarch's house 146
 He makes his own ; whilst my unhappy mistress
 In her lone chamber melts her life away
 In tears, unmoved by all the arguments
 Urged by her friends to soothe her sorrowing soul. 150

MED. O that the ethereal lightning on this head
 Would fall ! Why longer should I wish to live ?
 Unhappy me ! Death would be welcome now,
 And kindly free me from this hated life.

CHO. Dost thou hear this, O Jove, O Earth, O Light,
The mournful voice of this unhappy dame ? 156
Why thus indulge this unabated force
Of nuptial love, self-rigorous, hastening death ?
Let it not be thy wish : if a new bed
Now charms thy husband, be not his offence 160
Engraved too deep : Jove will avenge thy wrongs ;
Let not thy sorrows prey upon thy heart.

MED. O powerful Themis, O revered Diana,
See what I suffer, though with sacred oaths
This vile, accursed husband I had bound ! 165
O, might I one day see him and his bride
Rent piecemeal in their house, who unprovoked
Have dared to wrong me thus ! Alas, my father !
Alas, my country ! whom my shameful flight
Abandon'd, having first my brother slain ! 170

NUR. You hear her invocations, how she calls
On Themis, prompt to hear the suppliant's vows ;
And Jove, the avenger of neglected oaths
To mortal man : nor is it possible
Her fiery transports know a moment's pause. 175

CHO. What motives can be urged to draw her forth ?
Could we but see her, would she hear our voice,
Haply our pleaded reason might avail
To soothe her soul, and mitigate her rage.
My zeal shall not be wanting to my friends. 180
Go then, persuade her forth ; with soft address
Allure her hither : haste, thou friendly dame,
Ere her resentment burst on those within ;
For her full grief swells to a dreadful height.

NUR. I will attempt it, though I fear my voice 185
Will not prevail ; yet does your friendly zeal
Claim from me this return : but to her slaves,
When they approach to speak to her, she bears
The aspect of a furious lioness,

That watches o'er her young. If thou shouldst say
 That men of former times were unadvised, 191
 Shallow, and nothing wise, thou wouldst not err :
 For festivals, for banquets, and for suppers,
 They form'd the sprightly song, that charm'd the ear,
 Making life cheerful ; but with music's power, 195
 And the sweet symphony of varied strains,
 They knew not to assuage the piercing griefs
 That rack the heart, whence deaths and ruthless deeds
 Spread desolation : here to soothe the soul
 With lenient songs, were wisdom. Where the feast
 Is spread, why raise the tuneful voice in vain ? 201
 The table richly piled hath in itself
 A cheerfulness, that wakes the heart to joy.

CHO. I heard her lamentations mix'd with groans,
 Which in the anguish of her heart she vents ; 205
 And on her faithless husband, who betray'd
 Her bed, she calls aloud ; upon the gods,
 Thus basely wrong'd, she calls, attesting Themis,
 Daughter of Jove, the arbitress of oaths,
 Who led her to the shores of Greece, across 210
 The rolling ocean, when the shades of night
 Darken'd its waves, and steer'd her through the straits.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Ye dames of Corinth, I come forth, that you
 In naught may blame me : many have I known
 Of honorable birth, who lost respect ; 215
 Some, for retiring from the public eye ;
 And others, as too lavish of their presence :
 And some, who loved the calm of peaceful life,
 Have been defamed as spiritless and slothful :
 For 'tis not by the eye we rightly judge 220
 Of truth ; whoc'er, before he knows the heart,
Conceives dislike by sight, in nothing wrong'd,

Does ill. A stranger with peculiar heed
 Should form him to the temper of the state ;
 Nor would I praise the native, who, through pride
 And shallow thought, is to his citizens 226
 Wayward and insolent. For me, I sink
 Beneath this unexpected weight of ill
 Which falls upon me : all the joys of life,
 And all its glory, have I lost, my friends, 230
 And death is now my wish : for he, in whom
 My heart had treasured all its boast and pride,
 Proves faithless, and the basest of mankind.
 Thus is it, of all beings, that have life
 And sense, we women are most wretched : first 235
 With all our dearest treasures we must buy
 A husband, and in him receive a lord ;
 A hardship this : a greater hardship yet
 Awaits us ; here 's the question, if this lord
 Prove gentle, or a tyrant ; if the worst, 240
 To disunite our nuptials hurts our fame,
 Nor from the husband may our sex withdraw
 The plighted hand ; hence they, who change their state,
 Passing to untried tempers and new laws,
 Need a prophetic spirit, as at home 245
 Untaught, to choose their lord. If all our care
 Gives us a gentle husband, one that binds
 No galling yoke, happy our life indeed ;
 If not, death were more welcome. If the man
 Finds aught displeasing in his house, abroad 250
 He seeks relief, 'mongst his compeers or friends
 Uneasy thought diverting ; whilst our eyes
 Perforce are fix'd on one. Yet will they say
 We live an easy life, at home, secure
 From danger, whilst they lift the spear in war : 255
 Misjudging men ; thrice would I stand in arms
 On the rough edge of battle, ere once bear

The pangs of childbirth. But to thee these words
 Have not the force I feel in them ; for thine
 This country, thine a father's house, the wealth 260
 That brightens life, the sweet society
 Of friends is thine: I am an outcast wretch,
 Abandon'd, by my husband basely wrong'd,
 Borne from a foreign country as a prize.
 I have no mother, brother, kinsman here, 265
 To shelter me from this calamity :
 Yet would I beg of thee this little grace,
 If aught may be devised, aught plann'd, these ills
 With justice on my husband to repay,
 On him that gave his daughter, and on her 270
 Whom he hath wedded, to be silent : for
 A woman timid else, ill form'd to deeds
 Of daring courage, at the uplifted sword
 Appall'd, when injured in her nuptial bed,
 Feels her soul swell with rage that calls for blood. 275
 CHO. This will I do : with justice dost thou seek
 Revenge : no marvel, that thy wrongs afflict thee.
 But Creon, see, the monarch of this land,
 Advances, fraught, belike, with some new counsels.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. To thee, of aspect gloomy, of a soul 280
 Enraged against thy husband, my command
 I give to thee, Medea. Hie thee hence,
 An exile from this country ; thy two sons
 Take with thee ; linger not ; for this decree
 Is mine, I will enforce it ; nor my house 285
 Revisit more, till I have driven thee forth
 Beyond the utmost confines of this realm.
 MED. Ah me ! unhappy me ! Now must I sink,
 Lost, lost ; for, stretching every sail, my foes
 Press on, nor can I gain the sheltering shore. 290

Yet will I ask thee, injured as I am,
Why, Creon, dost thou drive me from this land?

CRE. I fear thee, (for I see no cause to use
Ambiguous phrase,) lest thou attempt some deed
Against my daughter, which no medicine 295
Can heal : by many a circumstance this fear
Is strengthen'd : thou art famed for knowlege, versed
In dangerous science, and resentment now
Inflames thee, from thy husband's bed estranged.
Thy menaces (for they have reach'd mine ear) 300
Breathe vengeance on the father that betrothed her,
On him that wedded her, on her that gave
Her plighted hand : with caution shall I guard
Against these threaten'd mischiefs ; better now
Incur thy hate, than, soften'd by thy words, 305
Repent hereafter of my foolish pity.

MED. Ah me ! not first hath this opinion now
Been hurtful to me ; often have I felt
The evil of it. Prudence would direct
The parent not to train his children's minds 310
Too deep in wisdom's lore ; for that, beside
Their love of ease, they from their citizens
Gain nothing but malevolence and envy.
If to malignant folly thou hold out
Some new-discover'd wisdom, thou wilt seem 315
Useless, not wise : to those, who pride themselves
In their much wisdom, thy superior fame
Will give offence. I feel this ; for in some
My knowlege raises envy : others deem me
Too easy ; of discordant manners some, 320
Some wayward ; yet my knowlege is not much.
By thee too I am fear'd, lest I should work thee
Some harsher mischief. No, not such my state,
(Fear me not, Creon,) as to dare offend
'Gainst persons of imperial dignity. 325

And wherein hast thou wrong'd me ? Thou hast given
 Thy daughter where it pleased thee ; but I hate
 My husband : thou, I ween, with prudent thought
 Hast form'd these measures, and thy fair success
 I envy not ; form your alliances, 330
 And be they fortunate ; but let me dwell
 Here in your land ; in silence will I bear
 My wrongs, submitting to superior power.

CRE. These are fair words, and soothing to the ear ;
 But ill intent, I fear, lurks in thy heart : 335
 The less for this will I confide in thee.

A woman, or a man, whose fiery spirit
 Flames out with anger, puts us on our guard,
 More than the prudent calmness that conceals
 Its hate in silence : therefore get thee gone 340
 With speed ; no more of speeches ; my decree
 May not be moved ; not all thy art shall win me
 To let thee stay, thus dangerous as thou art.

MED. By thy new-wedded daughter, at thy knees—

CRE. Thou wouldst waste words ; for ne'er shalt
 thou prevail. 345

MED. Hence wilt thou drive me, nor revere my
 prayers ?

CRE. I love thee not more than my family.

MED. Now, O my country ! I remember thee.

CRE. My country, next my children, is most dear.

MED. Alas, what fatal ills love works to man ! 350

CRE. That is, I ween, as fortune guides the event.

MED. Remember, Jove, the author of these ills.

CRE. Begone, slight woman, free me from my care.

MED. Cares are my portion, and no niggard store.

CRE. Quickly my guards shall drag thee hence by
 force. 355

MED. Not that, let not that be : I beg thee, Creon—

CRE. Thou wilt give trouble, woman, I perceive.

MED. I will away: 'tis not for that I beg—

CRE. Why then this struggle? Why not quit the land?

MED. One day, indulge me this, one single day,
To recollect my thoughts, to plan my course, 361
And make some poor provision for my sons,
Since that their father shows no care for them.
Have pity on them; thou hast children, thou,
Be sure, must feel a father's tenderness. 365
I care not for myself, since I must go
An outcast, but I weep for their distress.

CRE. Mine is no barbarous and unfeeling heart,
But touch'd with pity, often to my hurt;
And now, though reason tells me I do wrong, 370
Thou shalt obtain thy wish: but mark me well,
If you bright sun to-morrow in these realms
Behold thee and thy children, thou shalt die:
My word is pass'd, and thou shalt find it true.
One single day, if so thy needs require, 375
I will indulge thee; in that little space
Thou wilt not do the horrid deeds I dread.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

CHO. Unhappy woman, in thy hopeless state
Unhappy, which way wilt thou turn? What house,
What hospitable country wilt thou find 380
A refuge for thy griefs? Ah, what a tide
Of misery thy fate rolls swelling on!

MED. On every side I am inclosed with ills;
But not in this part; no, deem not in this.
Now with the bridegroom and his bride remains 385
The contest, and to all allied to them
No small affliction. Think'st thou I would cringe,
And fawn upon this man, but with some view
Of interest or design? I would not else.

Have oped my lips to him, or touch'd his hand. 380
 But mark his folly ; when he might have crush'd
 All my designs by chasing me from hence,
 He granted me this day ; and in this day
 My vengeance shall o'ertake my three great foes,
 The father, and my husband, and the bride. 385
 But of the many deaths at my command,
 I know not which, my friends, I first shall try.
 Shall I with flames destroy this bridal house ;
 Or, in the dead of night, when all are laid
 In deep repose, enter with silent step, 400
 And plunge into their breast the piercing sword ?
 Yet one thing is against me ; in the house
 If I am seized in such an enterprise,
 I by my death shall gratify my foes,
 Made their derision. Better then pursue 405
 The path, in which my science best is versed,
 And kill them by enchantments. Be it so ;
 And they are dead : what city will receive me ?
 What land will shelter me ? what faithful house
 Open its hospitable gates, my life 410
 Protecting ? None. Pause then a moment's space ;
 If some safe fortress haply may be found,
 With specious wiles in silence plan their death ;
 But if ill fortune with resistless force
 Drive me from this attempt, this hand shall wield 415
 The sword, and kill them, reckless of my life ;
 For to the height of daring am I come.
 Now by the goddess, whom I most revere,
 And chose for my assistant, Hecate,
 Who in the deep recesses of my house 420
 Hath placed her awful seat, not one of them,
 That wring my heart, shall glory in the deed.
 These nuptials will I make unpleasant to them
 And mournful ; this alliance shall they rue,

MEDEA.

175

And rue my flight. Rouse thee, Medea, wake 425
Thy deepest science, meditate, devise,
Call forth thy terrible power : the contest now
Demands a daring spirit. Dost thou feel
Thy sufferings? Vindicate thy glorious birth ;
Nor let the daughter of the sun be made 430
The mockery of the race of Sisyphus
By Jason's nuptials. Thou hast skill and art ;
A woman : Nature form'd our sex to good
Of slight capacity, but to revenge
Of ready and inventive subtlety. 435

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Refluent and mounting to their source
The sacred streams are roll'd ;
And Truth no more her righteous course,
Nor Justice knows to hold :
All things are changed : insidious trains 440
Are man's ; nor heavenly Faith remains.
These things our glory shall restore ;
And, brightening in the rolls of fame,
Honor shall grace the female name,
Opprobrious now no more, 445

ANTISTROPHE I.

To merit just, the vocal Muse
Shall change her ancient vein,
Nor faithless woman more accuse
In every taunting strain.
Had Phœbus, leader of the lay, 450
Bade the sweet lyre our hands obey,
We too had tuned the taunting air ;
For tales enough in records old
Of woman's falsehood have been told ;
Nor wants proud man his share. 455

STROPHE II.

Thou from thy father's royal house couldst rove,
 And all thy heart was mad with love ;
 Through clashing rocks adventurous sweep,
 Brave the rude dangers of the deep,
 And rest upon a foreign strand : 460
 There all thy loves, thy transports fled,
 An outcast from thy nuptial bed,
 Driven with disgrace an exile from the land.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Reverence of oaths and honest shame their reign
 In spacious Greece no more maintain ; 465
 But from the earth indignant fly,
 Shake their light wings, and seek the sky.
 Thine is thy father's house no more ;
 There no kind shelter shalt thou know,
 But these new nuptials pierced with wo ; 470
 Here reigns another queen of greater power.

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. This is not new ; for oft have I observed
 That stubborn anger is an evil, harsh
 And not to be appeased. The power was thine
 To hold thy residence in this land, this house, 475
 Couldst thou have learn'd with gentleness to yield
 Submission to its lords ; but thy rash tongue
 Hath wrought thy exile. Naught with me indeed
 Weighs thy intemperate and ceaseless speech,
 Reviling Jason as the worst of men. 480
 The rulers brook not this ; and for the abuse
 Cast on them, deem them gentle that no worse
 Than banishment befalls thee. I have still
 Soften'd the anger of the men in power,
 Desirous of thy stay ; but from thy taunts 485
Thy folly knows no respite, the great lords

Reviling still ; thou therefore art cast forth
 An exile. Nor for this do I desert
 My friends, but come to make provision for thee,
 That without treasures, or in want of aught, 490
 Thou with thy children mightst not leave the land.
 Exile draws many evils in its train ;
 But though thou hate me, lady, in return
 I never can be wrought to wish thee ill.

MED. O thou most vile, this black reproach my
 tongue 495
 Owes thy unmanly baseness ; thou art come,
 To me art come, most hateful to the gods,
 And me, and all mankind. Not fortitude
 Nor virtuous confidence is this, to look
 On a friend's face after such injuries ; 500
 But shamelessness, the foulest, worst disease,
 That blackens in the breast. Yet dost thou well,
 Thus coming ; for to vent reproaches on thee
 Will ease my heart, and give thee pain to hear them.
 This subject to its fountain will I trace. 505
 I saved thee, as the Grecian chieftains know,
 Who in the Argo shared this enterprise
 With thee, when sent to bend beneath the yoke
 The bulls whose breath was fire, and in the ground
 To sow the direful seed. The dragon, placed 510
 A sleepless guard to keep the golden fleece,
 Voluminous in many a scaly fold
 I slew, and to thee raised the light of life.
 My father and my house betray'd, with thee
 I to Iolcos plough'd the watery way. 515
 By fondness rather than by prudence led,
 Pelias I slew, and (what embitter'd death)
 By his own daughters : thus from every fear
 I freed thee ; and for all these bounties to thee,
 O thou most vile of men, hast thou betray'd me, 520

And in new nuptials lightly placed thy joys :
 Yet thou hast children ; this were venial else,
 Of this fresh wife to be enamour'd thus,
 Were my bed barren. Vanish'd is the faith
 Of oaths : perchance thou deem'st those gods not now
 The rulers of the sky, but that new lords 526
 Now reign, and give new laws to mortal man,
 For thou art conscious of thy perjuries.
 Oft hast thou hung upon this hand, these knees
 Too oft have been polluted by the touch 530
 Of this base man, for what but to deceive me ?
 Ah me, how am I fallen from all my hopes !
 Well, I will yet address thee as a friend,
 As if I hoped some mighty favor from thee :
 My questions too will show thee yet more base. 535
 Now which way shall I turn me ? Shall I go
 Back to my country and my father's house ?
 These I betray'd for thee. Or to the daughters
 Of Pelias ? 'Midst their sorrows, they will ope
 Their friendly gates to me, for that I slew 540
 Their father. Thus it is ; I have made those
 Averse to me, whom nature form'd my friends ;
 Those, who of me deserved no ill, to win
 Thy grace, I gave just cause to be my foes :
 And for these favors 'mongst the dames of Greece 545
 Me hast thou made most happy ; I have gain'd
 A glorious husband, and of wondrous faith,
 Wretch that I am ! If outcast hence I go
 A lonely exile, with thy lonely sons,
 Of friends forsaken, high renown this brings 550
 To the new-married husband, that his sons
 Are wandering beggars, and myself who saved thee.
 O Jove, why hast thou given us certain proof
 To know adulterate gold, but stamp'd no mark,
 Where it is needed most, on man's base metal ? 555

CHO. When friends with friends at variance kindle
strife,

Fierce is their anger and immedicable.

JAS. Behoves me here, it seems, to dress my speech
With no small care ; but, like a skilful pilot,
To edge along the wind, and steer my course 560
Through all this irksome storm of boisterous words.

I (since thy favors are thus magnified)
Deem Venus, and none else of gods or men,
My guardian in that voyage. Thou art versed
In fine-drawn reasonings ; but to trace this theme, 565
How love impell'd thee in these dangerous toils
To save me, were invidious ; with nice hand
I shall not weigh these things ; but where thy aid
Work'd aught of good, thy boast is not amiss.

Yet from my safely more hast thou received 570
Than thou didst give ; this I shall prove to thee.

In Greece, instead of a barbaric land,
Thou hast thy habitation, there to know
What justice is, and what the guardian power
Of law, uninfluenced by tyrannic force : 575

Through Greece thy wisdom is confess'd, thy name
In high renown ; but hadst thou pass'd thy days
In the wild corners of that distant land,
Fame had been silent of thee. In my house
I would not wish for gold, I would not wish 580
To breathe the enchanting melody of song
Surpassing Orpheus, would not fortune place me
Where I might shine conspicuous. Of my toils
This have I said, since thou hast urged me to it :

But for my royal nuptials, since thy tongue 585
Reviles me, I will show thee they were form'd
With prudence, not through wantonness, to thee
And to thy sons most friendly.—Hold thy peace.—

When from Iolcos hither I was come,

And brought with me Misfortune's numerous train,
 What happier measure, exile as I was, 591
 Could prudence dictate to me, than to wed
 The daughter of the monarch of the land?
 Not through disgust, or loathing of thy bed,
 Which cuts thy heart; nor struck with fond desire
 Of my new bride; nor emulous to raise 596
 A numerous offspring: with the sons I have
 Well satisfied, I there have no complaint;
 But, what imports us most, that we might live
 With dignity, nor be constrain'd with want; 600
 Knowing that every friend from poverty
 Keeps him aloof: thy sons too would I train,
 As suits my house, in splendor: if to thine
 I should add brothers, I would make one house
 Of all, a friendly union, and my state 605
 Would flourish. Thou indeed of other sons
 Mayst have small need; but it imports me much
 To raise my present progeny by that
 Which may arise: have I design'd amiss?
 But that the nuptial bed afflicts thy heart, 610
 Thou wouldst not say it; but your wayward sex
 In this are all united; if your bed
 Be safe, you think that every thing is yours;
 But if mischance befalls it, what before
 Was excellent and lovely, you decry 615
 As hateful. Had some other way been found
 To generate mankind, the female race
 Not form'd, this mischief had not then befallen us.
 CHO. Well, Jason, hast thou glozed thy artful tale;
 Yet must my thought (reluctantly I speak it) 620
 Deem thee unjust, betraying thus thy wife.
 MED. In many things to many mortals much
 Unlike I judge: the injurious man, whose tongue
Flows with pernicious rhetoric, I hold

To merit the severest punishment ; 625
 For confident his speech can varnish o'er
 The blackest deeds, his craft dares venture on them.
 It is not wisdom ; nor dost thou appear
 To me in splendid colors, nor thy speech
 Persuasive ; with a word will I confute it. 630
 These nuptials, wert thou not dishonest, ought
 To have been contracted, my consent first ask'd
 And won, not from thy friends thus close conceal'd.

JAS. Fine service hadst thou done me in this cause,
 Had I inform'd thee, when ev'n now thy heart 635
 Swells with a storm of unabated rage.

MED. That moved thee not ; but a barbaric bed
 Wants dignity, belike, to grace thy age.

JAS. Nay, be assured of this, I did not choose
 The king's alliance for the lady's sake : 640
 But, as I said before, it was my wish
 To save thee from distress, and to my sons
 Raise royal brothers to protect my house.

MED. Ne'er be such wretched happiness my lot ;
 Nor wealth be mine, that rends my bleeding heart. 645

JAS. Dost thou not know to form a different wish,
 And appear wiser ? Things of highest profit
 Charge not with wretchedness ; nor deem thyself
 Unhappy in the midst of happiness.

MED. Insult me : thou hast found a refuge here, 650
 Whilst I, a poor forsaken exile, fly.

JAS. Thou brought'st it on thyself ; blame none be-
 side.

MED. What doing ? marrying, and betraying thee ?

JAS. Uttering unhallow'd curses on the lords.

MED. On me the curses of thy house are pour'd. 655

JAS. No more of this will I debate with thee :
 But of my treasures if thou wilt accept
 Aught for thyself or for thy sons, to cheer

Your exile, tell me ; with a liberal hand
 I am disposed to give, and to my friends 660
 Send symbols ; their humanity will show thee
 All acts of courtesy : if thou refuse,
 Thy wisdom will be question'd ; let thy heart
 Abate its rage ; thou wilt fare better for it.

MED. I shall not use thy friends, nor will accept 665
 Aught of thy treasures : give not to me ; the gifts
 Of a bad man can bring no good with them.

JAS. I call the gods to witness, 'tis my wish
 To be assistant to thee and thy sons
 In all things ; but my bounty likes thee not : 670
 Thy fiery and indignant soul rejects
 Thy friends ; increase of misery must ensue.

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Why get thee gone ; too long thy lingering
 here,
 Enamour'd as thou art of thy new bride :
 Wed her : but, be the gods propitious to me, 675
 I tell thee, thou wilt dearly rue these nuptials.

STROPHE I.

When with a wild impetuous sway,
 The Loves come rushing on the breast,
 Each virtuous thought is rent away,
 Each breath of fame suppress'd : 680
 But when, confess'd her gentle reign,
 Enchanting Venus deigns to appear,
 Of all the powers of heaven most dear,
 She leads the Graces in her train.
 Ne'er from thy golden bow, queen of soft joy, 685
 Steep'd in desire thy shafts 'gainst me employ !

ANTISTROPHE I.

The noblest present of the skies,
Be modest temperance mine :

May no unruly passions rise,
 Nor pride and hate combine 690
 Their baleful venom wide to spread ;
 And, kindling rage and jealous strife,
 Embitter all the joys of life,
 In vengeance for the injured bed,
 O Venus, prompt connubial peace to approve, 695
 And quick to mark the faults of wandering love !

STROPHE II.

O my loved country, never let me roam
 An outcast from my native home,
 Outcast from thee and from my friends ;
 Whilst Poverty my slight attends, 700
 Sorrow, and soul-consuming Pain,
 And all Misfortune's cruel train :
 No ; ere I see that day,
 To death, let me to death be made a prey.
 Exiled from all my soul holds dear,—— 705
 Life hath no torture so severe.

ANTISTROPHE II.

This not from others, not from fame we know ;
 Our eyes behold the present wo.
 To thee, with heaviest griefs oppress'd,
 Thy house, thy country yields no rest : 710
 No friends their lenient aid impart
 To heal the anguish of thy heart.
 Unpitied may he die,
 Who to a friend assistance can deny ;
 Nor, to afflicted virtue kind, 715
 Unlocks the treasures of his mind !

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ÆG. Medea, hail ! When we salute our friends,
 No terms of higher honor can we use.

MED. Son of the wise Pandion, Ægeus, hail !

Whence to the walls of Corinth art thou come? 720

ÆG. Leaving the ancient oracle of Phœbus.

MED. What led thee to the prophet's central shrine?

ÆG. To ask the god how offspring may be raised.

MED. Hast thou lived childless, tell me, to this age?

ÆG. Such is my fortune; I am childless yet. 725

MED. Hast thou a wife, or lonely is thy state?

ÆG. Not lonely: mine is the connubial bed.

MED. What answer to thy question gave the god?

ÆG. Words of dark import, passing human reach.

MED. Am I allow'd to know the oracle? 730

ÆG. Most freely, for it needs deep-thoughted wisdom.

MED. What were the words? If I may hear them, tell me.

ÆG. Loose not the vessel's forward-stretching foot,—

MED. Ere thou do what? Or in what land arrive?

ÆG. Ere I revisit my paternal house. 735

MED. What then imports thy voyage to this land?

ÆG. A king named Pittheus at Trœzene reigns.

MED. The son of Pelops, famed for sanctity.

ÆG. The oracle to him would I impart.

MED. Deep is his wisdom, his experience great. 740

ÆG. Of all my friends in arms the dearest to me.

MED. Mayst thou be bless'd in all thy soul can wish!

ÆG. But why these tears? Why fades thy roseate hue?

MED. Ægeus, my husband is the worst of men.

ÆG. What say'st thou? Tell me what afflicts thy soul. 745

MED. I never gave him cause, yet Jason wrongs me.

ÆG. What hath he done? Nay, tell me all thy griefs.

MED. He weds another, one that here commands.

ÆG. And hath he dared that most flagitious deed?

MED. Ev'n so, and treats his former friends with
scorn. 760

ÆG. Induced by love, or hatred of thy bed?

MED. By raging love, and light inconstancy.

ÆG. Mischance go with him, faithless as he is.

MED. The alliance of the king, that charm'd his
mind.

ÆG. Who gave the bride? Inform me of the whole.

MED. Creon, the lord of this Corinthian state. 756

ÆG. Then, lady, thou hast cause indeed to grieve.

MED. Nay, farther, I am driven an exile hence.

ÆG. By whom? This adds new weight to thy dis-
tress.

MED. By Creon driven an outcast from this land.

ÆG. Doth Jason suffer it? I like not this. 761

MED. His words gainsay it, but in fact his wish
Is adverse to my cause. But by this beard
I beg thee, suppliant at thy knees I beg,
Pity me, pity a most wretched woman, 765
Nor see me thus abandon'd, fallen thus low:
Receive me in thy country, in thy house;
There give me refuge: so may thy desire
Of children be accomplish'd by the gods, 769
And thou die bless'd! Thou know'st not what of good
Thou here hast found. Childless thou shalt not be,
From that grief I will free thee: I will give thee
To raise a race; such potent charms I know.

ÆG. This grace for many causes I am prompt
To show thee, lady: reverence to the gods 775
First moves me, and the hope of progeny,
Which thou hast promised; expectation else
Sinks in despair: effectual be thy arts!
Come to my country; there will I receive thee,
As justice gives in charge, right hospitably. 780
Yet one thing must I mention; from this realm

I should be much averse to lead thee with me :
 Come of thyself, my house shall give thee welcome ;
 Thou shalt remain secure from violence ;
 And never, I will never send thee thence. 785
 Quit of thyself this land ; I would not give
 Those, who receive me here, cause of offence.

MED. It shall be so : but let thy faith be given,
 And thou in all things hast dealt nobly with me.

ÆG. Dost thou distrust me ? What new doubts
 arise ? 790

MED. Thee I distrust not ; but the hostile house
 Of Pelias hates me, Creon hates me too :
 Bound by thine oaths, to these thou wouldst not yield
 me,

Should they attempt to drag me from thy realms.
 Give me thy solemn promise, and adjure 795
 The gods ; and thou wilt be indeed my friend ;
 Nor will their heralds move thee : poor my state,
 And weak ; but wealth and regal power is theirs.

ÆG. There is much prudence, lady, in thy words.
 Is it thy wish I do this ? To refuse 800
 Be far from me : and thus too I shall act
 With greater safety, to thine enemies
 Urging this plea, and thy protection hence
 More strongly be secured ; propose the oath.

MED. Swear by the Earth, and by my father's fa-
 ther, 805
 The Sun, and every god that rules on high,—

ÆG. That I will do, or will not do—say what.

MED. That thou wilt never cast me from thy state
 By thine own act ; nor, should my foes demand me,
 Whilst thou hast life consent to give me up. 810

ÆG. I swear then by the Earth, by yon bright
 Sun,
 And all the gods, observance to thy words.

MED. Enough : but shouldst thou violate thine oath—

ÆG. Mine be each ill that impious man awaits.

MED. Go then, and blessings go with thee along :
Soon shall I reach thy city, having done 816
What I propose, and what I wish obtain'd.

CHO. And may the royal guide, the son of Maia,
Conduct thee safely, Ægeus ; may success
Attend thy hopes, and crown each anxious wish, 820
For generous and right noble is thy soul !

MEDEA, CHORUS.

MED. Great Jove, thou righteous Vengeance of
great Jove,
And thou bright orb of day ! Now shall I find,
My friends, a glorious conquest o'er my foes.
This leads to conquest, and my hopes rise high 825
That chastisement awaits them : for this man,
Where most the danger threaten'd, shows the port
Of all my counsels ; here then will I fix
My anchor'd bark, and to the royal town
Of Pallas bend my steps. Now will I tell thee 830
All my designs ; but look not for soft words
To pleasure tuned. Of my attendant train
One will I send to Jason, and intreat
Once more to see him here ; my words shall then
Be gentle to him, that I much approve 835
His actions ; that I see what honor waits
His royal nuptials, which he now prepares
Betraying me ; their high advantage own,
And say that all is honorably done.
I will intreat him that my sons may stay ; 840
Not in this hostile land that I would leave them
Exposed to the insults of mine enemies,
But that this daughter of the king may feel me,

And perish by my arts ; for I will send them
 To this new bride with presents in their hands, 845
 To win them leave to stay, not exiled hence ;
 A fine-wrought robe, a gold-entwined wreath,
 To bind her tresses : in these ornaments
 If she array her, instant shall she perish,
 And all that touch her ; with such potent spells 850
 These presents will I charm. But what a deed
 (Ay, there my heart is anguish'd,)—what a deed
 Must next be done ! My sons—I'll kill them both ;
 And who shall save them from me ? All the house
 Of Jason sunk in ruins, from this land, 855
 (Flying the slaughter of my dearest sons,
 My soul wrought up to this unhallow'd deed,)
 I go. To be derided by my foes,
 It is not to be borne : go to : hath life
 A blessing yet for me ? I have no country, 860
 I have no house, no refuge from my ills.
 There was my weakness, when my father's house
 I left, persuaded by the soothing words
 Of this false Grecian, who, with the just gods,
 Shall feel my vengeance : he no more shall see 865
 His sons by me alive, nor shall he raise
 By this new-wedded wife another race.
 The wretch shall perish, by my potent charm
 Wretchedly perish. Let me not be deem'd
 A poor, low-thoughted, tame, and timid thing : 870
 No ; to my foes relentless is my soul,
 But to my friends all gentleness ; and such
 Are held through life in honor's highest rank.
 CHO. Thy purpose since to us thou hast dis-
 closed,
 Studious of good to thee, and to assist 875
 The laws, I must dissuade thee from this deed.
 MED. My soul is fix'd : yet I forgive thy words ;

Thou hast not felt the anguish which I feel.

CHO. Can then a mother bear to slay her sons?

MED. So shall I work my husband greatest grief.

CHO. And be thyself most wretched of thy sex. 881

MED. So let me be : but intervening words
Are lost upon me. Go thou then ; with speed
Bring Jason hither ; thy tried faith I use
In all things : but take heed, speak not a word 885
Of my designs, if with a friendly mind
Thou wish thy mistress well, and art a woman.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Lo, where the bless'd Cecropian race,
Through many a rolling age renown'd,
Who from the gods their lineage trace, 890
And their unconquer'd sacred ground,
Nurtured in wisdom's noblest lore,
The purest air delighted breathe
The clearest skies beneath,
Where, as they say, in times of yore 895
The Muses from Pieria's chaste retreat
Planted their loved Harmonia's golden seat.

ANTISTROPHE I.

And where Cephisus through the vale
Labors his beauteous-winding way,
As Venus drew the freshing gale, 900
She bade the gladsome Zephyrs play,
And wave their light wings o'er the land ;
Then, as the roseate wreath she twined
Her fragrant locks to bind,
She sent her sons, a decent band, 905
Near Wisdom's hallow'd seat to hold their place,
And breathe on Virtue their divinest grace.

STROPHE II.

How shall these sacred streams, this state,
This town, though prompt, when Friendship
calls,

To ope each hospitable gate, 910

Thee in its bowers, its glades, its walls
Receive, from this unhallow'd deed

Polluted with thy children's gore?

Ah, spare them, we implore;

Let not their guiltless bosoms bleed! 915

Behold us prostrate at thy feet; forbear,
Thy sons; let friendship plead, and pity spare!

ANTISTROPHE II.

What rashness, fired with frantic rage,
Urged to these thoughts accursed thy mind?

How would thy daring hands engage 920

To do the deed thy soul design'd?

The children by the mother slain!—

Couldst thou with tearless eyes behold

In blood thy offspring roll'd?

Or can thy ruthless heart sustain 925

To see thy kneeling sons for mercy sue,
Yet in their blood thy horrid hands imbrue?

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I come at thy request; for though thy thoughts
Breathe anger, I would not be wanting to thee,
But hear whate'er of new be now thy wish. 930

MED. What hath been said amiss, I much intreat
thee,

Forgive me, Jason: right it is that thou
Bear with my passion for the many acts
Of our past love: calm reason hath resumed
Its station in my heart; much have I blamed 935

And chid myself ;—‘ Why, wayward as thou art,’
 Thus have I school’d me, ‘ why wilt thou give way
 To madness? Why this anger? All their thoughts
 Are good to me and friendly : I have made
 The monarch of this land mine enemy ; 940
 My husband too, who works my greatest good,
 Wedding this royal dame, that to my sons
 He may raise brothers. Check thy passion then :
 The gods thus kind, hast thou a cause of grief?
 Hast thou not sons? I know that we have fled 945
 Our country, and are destitute of friends.’
 Thus reasoning, I was sensible of much
 Imprudence, angry thus without a cause.
 Now I approve thee, now thy conduct deem
 Of prudent forecast, forming this alliance 950
 For us. I was a fool : I should have shared
 Thy counsels, have assisted them, have deck’d
 Thy bed, rejoicing that thy royal bride
 Regarded thee thus fondly. But we women
 Are—what we are : I would not of my sex 955
 Speak ill. But be not thou, like me, perverse,
 Nor folly quit with folly. I submit,
 And own the error of my judgment then ;
 But better counsels since have taken place.
 My sons, come forth ; come from the house, my sons,
 Come forth ; embrace your father, and with me 961
 Address him ; with your mother share his favor,
 No longer angry with his friends ; for we
 Are reconciled, and all our quarrels end
 In pleasing concord : take him by the hand.— 965
 Ah me ! the thought of some concealed ill
 Comes o’er my heart. Will you, my sons, live long
 To stretch your dear hands thus? Unhappy me !
 These eyes have lately learn’d to weep, this heart
 To know what fear is ; time hath soften’d me. 970

My anger 'gainst your father is appeased,
And tenderness hath fill'd mine eyes with tears.

CHO. From my eyes gushes also the warm tear.
O may no evil worse than this arise!

JAS. This I approve, nor blame thee for the past. 975

No wonder that a woman brooks it ill,
For other nuptials when, by interest led,
Her husband barter her. But now thy heart
Is calm'd to better counsels : time hath led
Reason in triumph to her seat : this shows thee 980

A woman truly wise. For you, my sons,
Your father, not improvident, hath form'd
The best of measures, with the favoring gods.
The state of Coriuth shall, I trust, behold
You, with your future brothers, eminent 985

In rank and glory ; fair advance your growth :
The rest your father (with whatever god
Is kind and friendly to us) will effect.

O, may I see you blooming in the prime
Of manhood, and to every virtue train'd, 990
Superior to my foes !—But why is this ?

Why stands the moist tear trembling in thine eye ?

Why is thy pale cheek turn'd aside, as if

Thou didst receive my words unwillingly ?

MED. Nothing : I was but thinking of my sons. 995

JAS. Be cheer'd : their welfare is my dearest care.

MED. I will be cheer'd, and trust thee : yet I am
A woman, and by nature prone to tears.

JAS. Why with excess of grief mourn o'er thy sons ?

MED. I am their mother : when thy wish was
breathed 1000

That they might live, a piteous thought arose,
If that might be. But why I sent to ask
Thy presence, here in part hath been explain'd ;
The rest I now will tell thee. Since the lords

Are bent to drive me from this land, for me 1005
 I judge it best, not to dwell here, a check,
 A curb on thee, and on thy royal friends ;
 For I am thought an enemy to their house :
 Well then, far distant from this land I fly ;
 But that my sons may by thy hand be train'd, 1010
 Intreat the king they be not exiled hence.

JAS. With what success I know not, I will move
 him.

MED. Nay rather move thy bride, that she intreat
 Her father not to drive my children hence.

JAS. Most readily : and, be she not unlike 1015
 Her gentle sex, I shall prevail with her.

MED. In this I will assist thee ; I will send her
 Presents, whose beauteous lustre far outshines
 Whate'er of radiance human eyes have seen :
 A fine-wrought robe, a gold-entwined crown 1020
 My sons shall bear. Of my attendant train
 Go one, and quickly bring these ornaments.
 Not in one instance shall thy bride be bless'd,
 But in a thousand ; her connubial bed
 Graced with a husband of such excellence, 1025
 And she adorn'd with those resplendent honors,
 Which once the Sun, my father's father, gave
 To his descendants. Take them in your hands,
 My sons, and as a nuptial present bear them
 To the bless'd bride, the daughter of the king ; 1030
 A present not to be despised, I ween.

JAS. Why wilt thou simply rob thyself of these ?
 Think'st thou the royal house in want of vests,
 In want of gold ? Nay, keep them, give them not :
 If me she deigns to value, she will hold 1035
 My words of higher worth than richest gifts.

MED. Dissuade me not, for presents with the gods

Have power ; and no persuasive words can charm
 The hearts of men like gold. Fortune is hers,
 And makes her absolute ; this youthful queen 1040
 Here governs all : to win my children's stay,
 My gold, nay ev'n my life would I resign.
 Go then, my sons, the royal house is nigh,
 Intreat, beseech your father's new-won wife,
 My mistress, that you may not from this laud 1045
 Be forced to fly ; present these ornaments ;
 And mark me, give them to no hands but hers.
 Haste then ; success attend you, and return
 With the glad news to cheer your mother's heart,
 The ardent wishes of her soul obtain'd. 1050

STROPHE 1.

Hope that thy sons shall live is now
 No more, ev'n now to death they go.
 This gorgeous prize
 Shall she receive with pride ;
 But ruin to the unhappy bride 1055
 In its refulgent circle lies.
 Soon as her hands this crown shall place
 Her golden-tressed brows to grace,
 She goes array'd for death,
 To the dark shades beneath. 1060

ANTISTROPHE 1.

The glittering robe's ambrosial ray
 Its tempting lustre shall display ;
 Her tresses bright
 Bound with this radiant gold,
 Her nuptial pomp the bride shall hold 1065
 Solemnised in the realms of night.
 Entangled in this net of fate,
 Misery and ruin on her wait ;
 Nor hath she power to fly
 Her ruthless destiny. 1070

STROPHE II.

Where, hapless husband, are the joys
 That crown thy nuptial state?
 Thy wish to kings to be allied,
 Blind as thou art to fate,
 With dreadful deeds thy sons destroys ; 1075
 And down the dreary road,
 To Pluto's dark abode
 Conducts thy sorrow-wedded bride.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Nor less for thee, unhappy dame,
 My heart with pity bleeds : 1080
 By thee in gore thy sons shall roll ;
 Whilst, prompt to horrid deeds,
 Vindictive of the unhallow'd flame,
 Which to a foreign bed
 Thy perjured husband led, 1085
 Wild passions swell thy stormy soul.

TUTOR, MEDEA, CHORUS.

TUT. The sentence, lady, is reversed, which doom'd
 Thy sons to banishment. The royal bride
 Received thy presents with a willing mind ;
 Hence to thy sons all here is peace.

MED. Alas ! 1090

TUT. Why thus disturb'd, since fortune to thy
 wish

Is kind ? Why is thy pale cheek turn'd aside,
 As thou receivest my words unwillingly ?

MED. Alas, alas !

TUT. This to the tidings brought

Is ill attuned.

MED. Yet heaves a deeper sigh. 1095

TUT. Have I unwittingly come fraught with ill ?
 I hoped to have told thee what would give thee joy.

MED. What thou hast told, thou hast told: I blame not thee.

TUT. Why downward bends thine eye? Why starts that tear?

MED. There is a strong necessity, old man; 1100
The gods, and my ill counsels call for this.

TUT. Be cheer'd: thy interest through thy sons yet lives.

MED. First will I send them—O unhappy me!

TUT. Not thou alone art of thy sons bereft:
As mortal, thy afflictions meekly bear. 1105

MED. I shall: but go thou in, and for my sons
Make ready what the occasions of the day
Require.—My sons, my sons, you have a city,
You have a house, in which, forsaking me,
O wretched me! you shall for ever dwell 1110

Rest of your mother: to another land
I go a fugitive, delight in you
Ere I enjoy, ere I behold you bless'd,
Ere I prepare you wives, ere I adorn
Your bridal bed, and hold the nuptial torch. 1115

Such the effects my headlong passions work!
In vain I nurtured you, my sons; in vain
I labor'd, and consumed myself with cares;
In vain I bore a mother's painful throes.

There was a time when I had many hopes, 1120
Wretch as I am, in you; that your fond love
With nursing diligence would tend my age,
And decently in death compose my limbs,
The wish of mortals: now that pleasing thought
Is vanish'd; and my life, deprived of you, 1125
Must wear away in misery and wo.

Your mother never with your longing eyes
Shall you view more; another state of life
Is yours. Alas, alas! why are your eyes,

My sons, fix'd fondly on me? Why that smile? 1130
 'Tis your last smile.—Ah me! what shall I do?
 My heart sinks in me. When I see my sons,
 Ye females, when I view their cheerful looks,
 I cannot,—No, ye former purposes,
 Farewell! My children will I lead with me, 1135
 Flying this country. What avails to grieve
 Their father with their ills, when my own heart
 Must feel a heavier wound? I will not do it.
 Farewell, my purpose.—Why this tenderness?
 Can I then wish to be their jest, their scorn, 1140
 Leaving my foes unpunish'd? I must dare
 The deed. These thoughts of gentleness arose
 From coward weakness: go, my sons, go in:
 Who to be present at my sacrifice
 Deems it unholy, let him look to it.— 1145
 I will not slack my hand.—Ah me, ah me!
 Do not, my soul, do not attempt this deed:
 No, wretch; forbear to touch them; spare thy sons:
 There shall they live with me, and be thy joy.—
 Now by the powers of vengeance in the realms 1150
 Beneath, this shall not be; I will not leave
 My sons exposed to the malignant pride
 And insults of my foes: since they must die
 (For die they must) by me, who gave them life,
 Death shall be given: this is my fix'd resolve, 1155
 Incapable of change. The royal bride
 Wears on her head the crown, and in the vest
 Is perishing: of this I am assured.
 A very dismal way I now must tread,
 But will send these a yet more dismal way. 1160
 Yet let me speak to them: Give me, my sons,
 Give me your hands; embrace me: O, that hand,
 How dear to me, how very dear those lips,
 That form, that noble aspect of my sons!

Bless'd may you be ! but there ; your father here 1165
 Hath reft each blessing. O, the sweet embrace !
 How soft their touch, how fragrant is their breath !
 Go, go, my sons ; I can no longer bear
 To look on you, but sink o'erpower'd with ills.
 I know, I feel the ills my soul now dares ; 1170
 But rage, which lords it o'er my breast, gives birth
 To all the dreadful ills that chasten man.

CHORUS.

Through many an argument profound,
 With studious care and thought refined, 1175
 Oft have I ponder'd in my mind,
 If female minds may be allow'd
 The depths of truth to sound.
 Yet doth the Muse indulgent deign
 Oft with our female bands to stay,
 Our souls to Wisdom's lore to train : 1180
 Yet not with all ; her hallow'd lay
 To the dull ear in vain had flow'd ;
 And few of all our sex, a favor'd few,
 Thy searching eye perchance shall view
 Touch'd with the mental strain. 1185
 This truth to all will I declare ;
 The free, the unwedded, those that claim
 No title to a father's name,
 Uncumber'd with that care,
 The paths of life with purer pleasure trace, 1190
 Than those that own a numerous race ;
 Their inexperience yet untaught,
 Who have no child, if children give
 Delight or anguish to the soul,
 Grants them exempt from toils to live, 1195
 Exempt from those anxieties of thought
 Which in the parent's bosom roll :

But those, who in their house survey
 The lovely branches blooming round,
 Through all their lives to cares a prey, 1200
 Feel their hearts bleed with many a wound.
 Anxious to form their opening mind,
 To train their youth to Virtue's lore ;
 Anxious to pile the treasured store
 To grace their sons, when they shall go 1205
 To the dark realms below ;
 And oft this anxious thought will rise,
 If Virtue's pure and holy flame
 Shall light them through the paths of honest fame ;
 Or all their cares and all their toils 1210
 To vice and folly be made spoils :
 The event in darkness lies.
 One ill, one bitter source of woes,
 The last, the worst, must I disclose :
 When high the glittering piles are placed, 1215
 When manhood holds its vigorous state,
 Their breasts with every virtue graced ;
 If such the imperious will of Fate,
 Comes Death, and sweeps them to the shades of
 night
 From the fond father's sight. 1220
 To black Misfortune's other train
 Why add the gods this sharpest pain,
 On the lost son's untimely bier
 With anguish'd souls to drop the tear ?

MEDEA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MED. With eager expectation I await 1225
 The event, my friends, from thence. But I behold
 One of the train of Jason ; on he comes
 With breathless haste ; he looks as he would tell
 A tale of some misfortune recent there.

MES. O, thou hast done an execrable deed : 1230
 Fly then, Medea, fly : instantly mount
 The winged galley, or the rapid car.

MED. What weighty cause requires this instant
 flight ?

MES. Ev'n now the daughter of the king is dead,
 And Creon, by thy potent charms destroy'd. 1235

MED. These are most glorious tidings : I will hold
 thee
 Hereafter 'mongst my best and kindest friends.

MES. What say'st thou ? Hast thy mind its perfect
 sense,

Or is this madness ? On the royal house
 By thee destruction falls : canst thou with joy 1240
 Welcome the tidings, unimpress'd with fear ?

MED. I could say much to this ; but let it pass.
 Nay, haste not hence, but tell me how they perish'd :
 If wretchedly, thou givest me double joy.

MES. When with their father to the bridal house
 Thy sons were come, we servants, who before 1246
 Felt in thy ills a sorrow, much rejoiced ;
 For soon the grateful news was spread, that now
 The former enmity was ceased betwixt
 Thee and thy husband : we caress'd thy sons ; 1250
 One kiss'd their hand, and one their blooming cheek.

Me to the apartment of the females joy
 Led with them : there our mistress, whom we now
 Must reverence in thy stead, ere she beheld
 Thy sons, on Jason roll'd her cheerful eyes, 1255
 But hid them soon, and turn'd her cheek aside
 Pale, and disgusted at thy sons' approach :
 Thy husband soothed her, and with gentle words
 Besought her not unkindly to receive
 Those whom he loved, to let anger cease, 1260
 To turn her face, and deem her husband's friends

As friends to her: he begg'd her to receive
 Thy presents, and for his sake to intreat
 Her father not to drive his sons to exile.
 She, when she saw the gorgeous ornaments, 1265
 Could not refuse, but promised all he ask'd;
 And ere her husband and thy sons were gone
 Far from the house, the various tinctured robe
 She took, and put it on; then on her head
 She placed the golden crown, and with nice care 1270
 Composed her tresses at the radiant mirror,
 And smiled upon the lifeless image there:
 Then rising from her seat with dainty step,
 Traversed the chamber, with the splendid gifts
 Delighted; and full oft, with head erect, 1275
 Cast on the mirror her admiring eyes.
 A sight of horror follow'd: from her cheeks
 The roses fled; her trembling limbs with pain
 Support her staggering steps to reach her seat
 Ere on the floor she sunk. An aged dame, 1280
 One of the attendant train, who thought that Pan
 Came in his anger, or some other god,
 Awoke the solemn supplicating strain:
 But when she saw the white foam from her mouth
 Burst forth, her eye-balls starting from her head 1285
 With wild distortion, and her roseate blood
 Sink colorless, she gave a shriek of wo,
 A sound far other than her former strain.
 One to the apartments of the father rush'd,
 One to the lately-married husband; all 1290
 Was wild confusion through the house: and now,
 Impetuous in its course, the fierce disease

1281 The ancients attributed all sudden terrors, and sudden sicknesses, such as epilepsies, for which no cause appeared to Pan, or to some other deity. This anger of the god they endeavored to avert by a hymn, which had the nature of a charm.

Had run its wild career. She, hapless she,
 Speechless before, and closed her stiffening eye,
 Heaved a deep groan, and tried to raise herself 1205
 Conflicting with a double pest: the gold,
 Wreathed round her head, (astonishing to see!)
 Emits a stream of all-devouring fire:
 The fine-wrought vest, presented by thy sons,
 Corrodes her flesh. She, starting from her seat, 1300
 Flies all on fire, tosses her burning locks,
 This way and that way shakes her head, and strives
 To disengage the crown: the circling gold
 Held its fix'd grasp; and when she toss'd her head,
 The whirling fire with twofold fury blazed; 1305
 Till, vanquish'd by her sufferings, on the floor
 She falls; but so unlike what once she was,
 Scarce could the father's eye his daughter own.
 No more the liquid lustre of those eyes, 1300
 Those blooming cheeks no more retain'd their grace:
 But from her head blood mix'd with fire flow'd down;
 And, like the tear that dewes the pine, her flesh,
 Melted in putrid drops, consumed beneath
 The rankling venom. Dreadful sight! all fear'd
 To touch the body, by her sufferings warn'd. 1315
 The unhappy father, ignorant of all
 Her miserable state, with hasty step
 Entering the chamber, with a piteous cry
 Fell on the body, clasp'd it in his arms,
 Kiss'd it, and thus address'd it:—'O my child, 1320
 O my unhappy child! what cruel god
 Hath thus destroy'd thee? Who my feeble age
 Hath bow'd, deprived of thee, down to the tomb?
 Alas, my daughter, I would die with thee!
 Then, pausing from his sad laments, he tried 1325
 To raise his aged body, but was held,
 Like ivy round the laurel's branches twined,

Held by the fine-wrought robe : his strugglings now
 Were dreadful ; on his knees he strove to rise,
 That drew him back ; if he essay'd his strength 1330
 With greater efforts, from his bones it rent
 His aged flesh ; till faint and motionless
 He lay, and breathed out his unhappy life,
 Worn out and wasted with his ills. In death
 They lie, the daughter and the hoary father 1335
 Together stretch'd, a sight that calls for tears.
 Now thou hast heard my tale, fly hence, be gone,
 Or vengeance, be assured, will on thy head
 Recoil. I have not now first learn'd that all
 The affairs of mortal men are a mere shadow ; 1340
 Nor would I fear to say, that those, who most
 Boast of their wisdom and their deep research,
 The widest in the paths of folly stray.
 No mortal man is happy : if the tide
 Of wealth flows in upon him, one may be 1345
 More fortunate than others, happy never.

CHO. The gods on Jason will this day inflict
 Variety of ills, with justice all.

But thee, unhappy daughter of the king,
 Thee we lament, and thy calamities. 1350
 From Jason far, far from thy bridal bed,
 To Pluto's dreary mansions art thou gone.

MED. This deed, my friends, is fix'd, to slay my
 sons

With quickest speed, then hasten from this land ;
 Nor fondly lingering, leave them to be slain 1355
 By some more hostile hand : since they must die
 (For die they must) by me, who gave them life,
 Death shall be given : and thou, my heart, be
 arm'd ;

Yield not to weak reluctance, nor delay
 A dreadful, but a necessary deed. 1360

Come, my unhappy hand, seize thou the sword,
 Seize it, and wind thy progress to the goal
 Of miserable life : faint not, nor think
 Of thy poor children, O how dear to me !
 For this short day remember not thy sons ; 1365
 Hereafter mourn at leisure : though I kill them,
 Yet were they dear, and I—a very wretch.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O Earth, and thou who roll'st on high
 Thy all-illuming flame,
 Cast from thy radiant car thine eye, 1370
 And view this raging dame ;
 To slaughter ere she gives the reins,
 Ere in her children's gore her hands she stains :
 For from thy golden line
 Their splendid origin they draw ; 1375
 And man with holy awe
 Refrains from spilling blood divine.
 Check, god of brightness, curb, control
 This frenzy of her soul ;
 And far, whilst yet her children live, 1380
 Far from the bloody house this fell Erinnys drive !

ANTISTROPHE.

In vain to thee a mother's pain,
 Thy cares, thy labors lost ;
 Thine is a mother's name in vain,
 In vain this dearest boast. 1385
 O thou, whose dauntless heart could brave
 The pass, where howls the inhospitable wave,
 Whose shouldering torrents roll
 The dark-brow'd clashing rocks between !
 Ah why, unhappy queen, 1390
 Why rends this ruthless rage thy soul ?

No lavers cleanse the murderous hand
 With kindred blood profaned ;
 But soon his house in ruins lies,
 As desolation marks the vengeance of the skies. 1395

FIRST SON. What shall I do ? How fly my mother's
 hands ? [within.

SECOND SON. I know not ; dearest brother, we shall
 die.

CHO. Heard you the cry ? Heard you the chil-
 dren's voice ?

O, thou unhappy, thou ill-fated woman !
 Let me go in to them : I deem it right 1400
 To snatch the children from her murderous hands.

SON. Nay, by the gods, assist us, now, ev'n now,
 For we are nigh the inevitable sword.

CHO. Thou wretch ! art thou of iron, or of rock,
 That thou wilt kill thy sons, whom thou brought'st
 forth, 1405

With thine own hands ? The annals of past times
 Record but one, one only furious dame,
 Who plunged her hands in her dear children's blood :
 And heaven-sent madness had o'erturn'd the sense
 Of Ino, by the wife of Jove driven forth, 1410
 And wandering from her house : when she had slain
 Her sons, as o'er the sea-beat beach she roved,
 She rush'd into the waves, and perish'd with them.
 Remains there aught more horrible than this ?
 Thou female bed, fruitful of various ills, 1415
 What woes, what miseries hast thou caused to man !

JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye female train, that near this mansion stand,
 Say, is Medea in the house, who wrought
 These deeds of horror, or withdrawn by flight ?

But she must hide her deep beneath the earth, 1420
 Or rise on light wings through the ethereal height,
 Or vengeance for the royal house will fall
 With fury on her. - Doth her pride presume,
 That, having slain the monarchs of this land,
 Her flight shall be secure from chastisement? 1425
 But less for her than for my sons my care :
 Revenge from those, whom she hath wrong'd, shall fall
 On her : I come to save my children's lives ;
 Lest on their heads the kindred of the king
 Punish their impious mother's murderous deed. 1430

CHO. Thou know'st not, wretched Jason, to what
 height

Thy ills are risen, or this thou hadst not said.

JAS. What! does her purpose reach to kill me too ?

CHO. Thy sons are dead beneath their mother's hands.

JAS. Ah me! what say'st thou? Thou hast pierced
 my heart. 1435

CHO. Think of thy sons as living now no more.

JAS. Where kill'd she them? abroad, or in the house ?

CHO. Open the door, and thou wilt see them slain.

JAS. Instant, ye menial train, unbar the door,

Give me admittance, that I may behold 1440

This aggravated ill, my children slain,

And drag her to deserved punishment.

MED. Why with this tumult dost thou beat the door,

Seeking the dead, and me, who did the deed ?

Forbear this uproar. Wouldst thou aught with me ?

Speak it; but never shall thou touch me more : 1446

The Sun, my father, gives me such a car,

A safe protection from each hostile hand.

JAS. O thou detested woman, most abhorr'd

1447 We must here suppose that Medea appears above in a
 chariot drawn by dragons, bearing with her the bodies of her
 slaughtered sons.

By the just gods, by me, and all mankind, 1450
 In thine own children who couldst plunge the sword,
 Their mother thou, to reave me of my sons ;
 And, having done this deed, dost yet behold
 The sun, the earth, this deed of horror done !
 Perdition seize thee ! now I know thee : then 1455
 I knew thee not, when from thy home I led thee,
 Led thee to Greece from a barbaric shore,
 Pernicious monster, to thy father false,
 And traitress to the land that nurtured thee ;
 And now the vengeful Furies on my head 1460
 Punish thy crimes ; for, with thy brother's blood
 Distain'd, the gallant Argo didst thou mount :
 This was a prelude to thy ruthless deeds.
 Wedded by me, a mother too by me,
 Thy children hast thou murder'd, in revenge 1465
 For my new bed ; an act, no dame of Greece
 Would ever dare attempt : yet I preferr'd thee
 To all their softer charms, and wedded thee,
 Alliance hateful and destructive to me,
 A tigress, not a woman, of a soul 1470
 More wild, more savage, than the Tuscan Scylla.
 But millions of reproaches would not gall
 That hard, unfeeling heart. Then get thee gone,
 Achiever of base mischiefs, blood-stain'd pest,
 Stain'd with thy children's blood, be gone and perish.
 For me remains to wail my hopeless state ; 1475
 For from my nuptials never shall I taste
 The promised joy, nor see my sons alive,
 Dear objects of my care, for ever lost.

MED. Full answer to thy words could I return,
 Recounting each past circumstance ; but Jove, 1481
 The almighty father, knows what grace I shower'd
 On thee, and what requital thou hast made.
 Thou shalt not pass thy wanton life in joys,

My bed dishonor'd, and make villanous jests 1485
At my disgrace ; nor shall thy royal bride,
Nor the proud Creon who betrothed her, dare
To chase me from this country, unchastised.

Call me a tigress then, or, if thou wilt,
A Scylla howling 'gainst the Tuscan shore : 1490
I, as is right, have taught thy heart to bleed.

JAS. Thy heart too bleeds, a sharer in these ills.

MED. Be thou assured of that : yet in my griefs
I joy thou canst not make a mock at them.

JAS. My children, a bad mother have you found.

MED. My sons, you perish'd through your father's
folly. 1496

JAS. Yet my right hand plunged not the murderous
sword.

MED. But thy foul wrongs and thy new nuptials
plunged it.

JAS. And for these nuptials hast thou kill'd thy
sons ?

MED. This to a woman deem'st thou a slight pain ?

JAS. To one discreet ; but all is ill to thee. 1501

MED. These are no more ; and that shall rend thy
heart.

JAS. Their shades shall pour their vengeance on thy
head.

MED. The just gods know which first began these
ills.

JAS. And the gods know thy execrable heart. 1505

MED. Thou and thy bitter speech are hateful to me.

JAS. And thine to me : this soon may have an end.

MED. How ? for I wish to free me from thy sight.

JAS. Give me my sons, to mourn and bury them.

MED. Never ; for on the height, where Juno's shrine
Hallows the ground, this hand shall bury them, 1511
That hostile rage may not insult their ashes,

And rend them from the tomb : a solemn feast
 And sacrifice hereafter to this land
 Will I appoint, to expiate this deed 1515
 Of horrid murder. In the friendly land,
 Where once Erectheus reign'd, the house of Ægeus,
 Pandion's son, is open to receive me :
 Thither I go. But thou, as thy vile deeds
 Deserve, shalt vilely perish, thy base head 1520
 Crush'd with the mouldering relics of thy Argo,
 And of my nuptials feel that wretched end.

JAS. These may the Erinnyes of thy sons destroy,
 And Justice, which for blood vindictive calls
 For blood.

MED. What god will hear thee, or what fury, 1525
 Thou perjured, base betrayer of the rites
 Of hospitality ?

JAS. Away, away,
 Thou pest abhorr'd, thou murderer of thy sons.

MED. Go to thy house ; go, and entomb thy wife.

JAS. I go, deprived, alas, of both my sons. 1530

MED. This grief be thine, ev'n to thy latest age.

JAS. O my dear sons !

MED. Ay, to their mother dear,
 But not to thee.

JAS. And wherefore didst thou kill them ?

MED. To rend thy heart.

JAS. Ah me, ah wretched me !
 I long to kiss the dear cheeks of my sons. 1535

MED. Thou wouldst address them now, embrace
 them now ;

Then thou couldst chase them from thee.

JAS. By the gods,
 Give me to touch their soft and delicate flesh.

MED. Never : thy words are thrown away in vain.

JAS. Hear'st thou this, Jove, with what indignant
pride 1540
I am rejected, with what insults wrong'd
By this abhorr'd, this child-destroying tigress?
Yet what I may, what power is left me yet,
I will lament them, will sit down and wail,
And call to witness the avenging gods, 1545
That, having slain my sons, thou hast denied me
To touch the dead, and lay them in the tomb.
O that I never, never had begot them,
To see them thus, thus murder'd by thy hands! 1549
CHO. Jove in high heaven dispenses various fates:
And now the gods shower blessings, which our hopes
Dared not aspire to, now control the ills
We deem'd inevitable: thus the god
To these hath given an end we never thought:
Such is the dreadful fortune of this day. 1555

HIPPOLYTUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

VENUS.

HIPPOLYTUS.

ATTENDANTS.

PHÆDRA.

NURSE.

THESEUS.

MESSANGER.

DIANA.

CHORUS of Træzenian dames.

HIPPOLYTUS.

ARGUMENT.

HIPPOLYTUS, the son of Theseus, devoting himself to the service of Diana, not only neglects Venus, but treats her worship with disrespect. This imprudence draws on him the indignation of that goddess, which cannot be appeased but by his ruin: for this purpose she inspires Phædra, the wife of his father, with a guilty passion for her step-son, which she in vain attempts to suppress. Her nurse, however, extorts the guilty secret from her mistress, and, contrary to her command, under the sanction of an oath of secrecy, reveals her situation to the youth, who expresses his abhorrence of the declaration with no small degree of asperity. The unhappy Phædra, betrayed and disgraced, resolves on immediate death; and, instigated by revenge, dies with a letter fastened to her hand, in which she accuses Hippolytus to his father of having committed the very crime which his virtue had rejected with horror. This accusation is readily believed by the infatuated monarch, who, having pronounced a sentence of exile against his son, intreats Neptune severely to punish him for his supposed incontinence. Hippolytus, compelled to avoid the resentment of his father, pursues his journey by the sea-shore; when his horses are so much terrified at the appearance of a bull sent by Neptune, that they run among the rocks, till the chariot is broken to pieces, and the young prince mortally wounded. Theseus considers this divine interposition as an additional proof of the truth of the accusation, when the testimony of the goddess Diana herself fully exculpates his son, by revealing the displeasure of Venus and the guilt of Phædra. Hippolytus is now conveyed into the presence of his repentant father, and, after expressions of mutual tenderness and regret, expires.—[The scene is at Træzene, in the vestibule of the palace of Pittheus.]

VENUS.

A GODDESS not inglorious in the skies
 Is Venus, and 'mongst mortals great my power,
 Whether beyond the ocean they behold
 The sun's bright beams, or o'er the Atlantic bound.
 Those, who with reverence own my power, I grace 5
 With honor; but chastise the hostile pride
 That vaunts itself against me: for a sense
 Of pleasure touches ev'n the heavenly race,
 When mortals pay them homage. Of these words
 Soon will I show the truth: the son of Theseus, 10
 Hippolytus, of Amazonian strain,
 By the chaste Pittheus school'd, of all that dwell
 Within Truzene's walls, alone defies me
 As the most worthless of the gods, and love
 He holds in scorn, and the connubial bed; 15
 But to Diana, sister of Apollo,
 His vows, as to the greatest of the gods,
 With honor are address'd; and still he haunts
 (Consorting with the virgin) the green woods,
 And from their coverts drives the beasts of chase 20
 With his fleet dogs, aspiring far beyond
 Human society. But this excites
 No envy in my breast; I deem not this
 A worthy cause: but for offences aim'd
 Against my power, Hippolytus this day 25
 Shall feel my vengeance. Slight will be my toil
 To effect what long hath been prepared; for once,
 As from the house of Pittheus, to behold
 And celebrate the sacred mysteries,
 He came, at Athens the illustrious wife 30
 Of Theseus, Phædra, saw him, and her heart

12 Ægeus, in his return from the oracle of Delphi, went to Truzene to consult the wise and religious Pittheus, who gave him his daughter Æthra, the mother of Theseus.

(Such was my will) felt the fierce flames of love ;
 And ere she hither to Trœzene came,
 A temple there she raised to Venus, nigh
 The rock of Pallas, which o'erlooks this land, 35
 Struck with an absent love ; and future times
 Shall tell that for Hippolytus she raised
 The temple to the goddess. But when Theseus,
 The sons of Pallas slain, to expiate
 The stain of blood, left the Cecropian land, 40
 And with his wife steer'd to these realms his course,
 A voluntary exile for the space
 Of one revolving year, then did she sigh,
 And, though her heart felt all the pangs of love,
 Conceal'd her anguish, and in secret pined ; 45
 Nor one of her attendants knew the cause
 Of her disease. This love shall not be lost
 Without effect ; to Theseus will I show it :
 It shall be known ; and this mine enemy
 By imprecations shall his father kill ; 50
 For once the monarch of the main this grace
 To Theseus granted, that of three requests
 Presented to the god, not one should fall
 Void of its purpose. Of illustrious fame
 Is Phædra, yet together let her perish : 55
 I have not for her life that tenderness,
 As not to pour such vengeance on my foes
 As shall be pleasing to me.—But I see
 This son of Theseus coming ; from the chase
 Hippolytus returns : I will be gone ; 60
 For with him comes a numerous train of youths,

39 Pallas was the brother of Ægeus : his sons, for some
 factious attempt against the state of Athens, were slain by
 Theseus. A voluntary exile for a year, in which expiations
 were made, was the usual atonement for shedding kindred
 blood.

Who to Diana raise the noisy song.
 Full little thinks he that the gates of hell
 Are open'd, and he sees this sun no more.

HIPPOLYTUS, ATTENDANTS.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Follow, follow, follow me ;	65
To Diana raise the strain :	
Goddess of the chase is she,	
And admits us of her train.	

ATTENDANTS.

Virgin goddess of the chase,	
Queen of every noble grace,	70
Holy, awe-commanding power,	
Whom to Jove Latona bore,	
Hail, Diana, and again	

Hail ; thou most beauteous of the virgin train,	
That tread the wide-extended realms above	75
Radiant, and grace the golden courts of Jove !	

HIPPOLYTUS.

Hail, Diana, virgin bright,	
Fairest of the forms divine,	
That in heaven's ethereal height	
Graced with beauty's radiance shine !	80

Thee, goddess, to adorn, I bring this crown	
Enwoven with the various flowers that deck	
The unshorn mead, where never shepherd dared	
To feed his flock, and the scythe never came ;	
But o'er its vernal sweets unshorn the bee	85

Ranges at will, and modest nature rolls	
The irriguous streamlet ; garish art hath there	
No share : of these the modest still may cull	
At pleasure, interdicted to the impure ;	
But for thy golden tresses, honor'd queen,	90
<i>Receive this garland from my pious hands.</i>	

To me alone of mortals is this grace
 Vouchsafed, to share thy company, to hold
 Free converse with thee, and to hear thy voice,
 Though not permitted to behold thy face. 95
 But let my life, as I begun it, end.

ATT. Say, royal youth, (for we should call the gods
 Alone our lords,) wilt thou hear counsel from me?

HIP. Most willingly; I else should seem unwise.

ATT. Know'st thou the common law to man pre-
 scribed? 100

HIP. I know not; nor thy question, what it means.

ATT. To hate whate'er of haughty scorns to please.

HIP. And justly, for the haughty all must hate.

ATT. And is there in the affable a grace?

HIP. Much, and with little labor to be won. 105

ATT. And thinkest thou this reaches to the gods?

HIP. It must, since from the gods we have our laws.

ATT. Why then this haughty goddess not address?

HIP. What goddess? But be cautious of offence.

ATT. Venus, that hath her station at thy gates. 110

HIP. Her at a distance I, as chaste, salute.

ATT. Yet is she haughty, and 'mongst men renown'd.

HIP. Each different gods reveres, and different men.

ATT. Were thy thoughts what they ought, thou
 wouldst be bless'd.

HIP. A god revered by night delights not me. 115

ATT. Sacred should be the honor of the gods.

HIP. Go, my companions, pass this dome, prepare
 Provisions; for the table richly spread
 After the chase is grateful. I must see
 My coursers dress'd, that after my repast 120
 I well may breathe them harness'd to the car:
 But to thy Venus here I bid farewell.

ATT. But we, with better thought, (for from young
 men

We must not take example) as becomes
 Our humble station, to thy image pay 125
 Our vows, imperial Venus: be it thine
 To pardon him, if driven by headlong youth
 He speaks imprudently: do thou appear
 As if thou heard'st him not: it well becomes
 The gods to be more wise than mortal men. 130

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

There is a rock, from whose deep base
 The bubbling fountains flow;
 And from the top we sink the vase
 To reach the stream below.
 I have a friend, who thither brought 135
 Her vests, with radiant purple wrought,
 To bathe them in the crystal dews;
 Then on the rock's steep ridge display
 To the warm sun's ethereal ray
 Their richly-tinctured hues. 140

ANTISTROPHE I.

There first from her the tidings came,
 That languishing away
 On her sick couch, the royal dame
 In her apartments lay;
 And, every eye avoiding, spread 145
 The light veil o'er her golden head.
 Three days from food, through pining grief,
 Have her ambrosial lips refrain'd;
 And, with some secret anguish pain'd,
 From death she hopes relief. 150

136 This is not only a picture of ancient manners, such as Homer exhibits in Nausica; but the mention of the purple robes denotes the dame to be of the royal house, which gives authenticity to the relation.

STROPHE II.

Some god, unhappy queen, hath sent
 These tumults in thy breast,
 By Pan's dismaying terrors rent,
 By Hecate possess'd,
 Or by the mighty Mother's power 155
 Who raving roves the mountains o'er.
 Or sends the huntress queen this pain,
 Neglected in the solemn rites?
 She roams along the lakes, the heights,
 And o'er the briny main. 160

ANTISTROPHE II.

Or is thy lord, the Athenian chief,
 To vagrant pleasures led?
 Dost thou for this indulge thy grief,
 And mourn thy injured bed?
 Or to Trœzene's friendly bay 165
 Hath a bark plough'd the watery way,
 With tidings that afflict thy mind?
 From Crete some dismal accident
 May have my queen, her sad heart rent,
 To her sick couch confined. 170

EPODE.

Oft in the female heart, depress'd with fear,
 Mad melancholy loves to dwell,
 When the full months revolving tell
 That child-birth's painful hour draws near.
 These fears, the pains of old I bore; 175
 But then the heavenly, arrow-loving maid
 Was it my wont to implore;
 And, prompt to give her lenient aid,
 Diana came, and with her led
 The powers that guard the nuptial bed. 180

But see, the aged nurse before the doors

Supports her from the house : a gloomy cloud
 Hangs thickening on her brow : what this may be
 I wish to know ; and why, unhappy queen,
 The transient bloom is faded from her cheek. 185

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

NURSE. Unhappy state of mortals, thus to waste
 With irksome sickness ! What, to give thee ease,
 Shall I attempt ? What shall I not attempt ?
 Here mayst thou view the light of heaven, here
 breathe
 The ethereal air ; here press thy sickly couch 190
 Before the house ; for often didst thou ask
 To be led hither : to thy chamber soon
 Wilt thou return ; for changeful is thy mind,
 And nothing pleases ; what is present to thee
 Delights thee not, expecting more of good 195
 In what is absent. Sickness hath in this
 Advantage o'er the arts that work its cure :
 That is a simple ill ; but these require
 Attentive thought, and labor of the hands.
 But all the life of man is full of pain, 200
 And trouble knows no pause. If there be aught
 Than life more precious, darkness hangs around,
 Concealing it in clouds : this present light
 Ill claims our love, for that it gilds this earth ;
 And we know nothing of our future life, 205
 Discover nothing of the realms below ;
 But in perplexing fables all is wrapp'd.

PHÆ. Yet bear me up, my friends, support my
 head ;
 I have no strength : you, that attend me, hold
 My feeble hands. How cumbrous is this dress ! 210
 Ill can my head support it ; take it off,
 And let these crisped tresses flow. Ah me !

NURSE. Be cheer'd, my child, nor with this restless
motion

Weary thy weak limbs ; easier wilt thou bear
Thy sickness resting calmly, and thy mind 215
Arming with patience : in this mortal state
None are exempt from struggling with their ills.

PHÆ. O, from the limpid fountain might I draw
The cooling stream, and, on the grassy bank
Reclined, beneath the poplars rest my head ! 220

NURSE. What means that wish ? Ah, speak not
words like these

To many ; there is something wild in them.

PHÆ. O, bear me to the mountain ; to the pines,
The forest would I go, where the fleet hounds
Pursue the dappled hinds ! O, by the gods, 225
I long to cheer the dogs of chase, to wave
O'er my bright tresses the Thessalian dart,
And grasp the pointed javelin in my hands !

NURSE. Whence this desire, this fondness for the
chase ?

Why from the limpid fountain wouldst thou take 230
The cooling draught ? Beside the citadel
Headlong the gushing waters roll along
The living stream : thence mayst thou slake thy thirst.

PHÆ. Diana, goddess of the sacred lake,
And of the equestrian courses, in thy field 235
O how I long to tame the Hænetian steeds !

NURSE. Why are thy words again thus wild ? Ev'n
now

The mountain and the chase was all thy wish ;
Now in the thirsty sands to tame the steed.
Inexplicable this, but that some god 240

234 Here was the gymnasium of Træzene ; and here a temple was erected to Diana by Saron, an ancient king of Træzene, who gave his name to the Saronic gulf.

Whirls to and fro thy wild, disorder'd sense.

PHÆ. What have I done, unhappy as I am,
 And whither wander'd from my sober sense?
 I raved: some angry god hath wrought this ill.
 Ah me, unhappy! Let thy friendly hand 245
 Cover my head again: I am ashamed
 Of what I said: O cover me: the tear
 Drops from mine eye, and on my cheek I feel
 The warm blush rise. How painful, when the sense
 Resumes its former functions! To be mad 250
 Is dreadful; yet in this a softer ill,
 We have no sense of the calamity.

NURSE. Thy head again I cover: when will death
 Cover my body? From this length of life
 Much have I learn'd: best suited to the state 255
 Of mortal life are mutual friendships form'd
 With moderation, such as take not root
 Deep in the soul; affections, that with ease
 May be relax'd, or closer bound at will:
 For that one heart should feel the ills of two; 260
 This is a grievous burden, as for her
 I am oppress'd with sorrow. So through life
 A fondness that affects the heart, they say,
 Brings more of pain than pleasure, and more wars
 Against the health: thus what is violent 265
 Hath less of praise from me, than what proceeds
 With moderation: this the wise allow.

CHO. Thou aged matron, faithful from her youth
 To the imperial Phædra, we behold
 Her cruel sufferings; but no symptoms mark 270
 What her disease may be; of this we wish
 To make inquiry, and to learn from thee.

NURSE. I am not well assured, nor will she speak it.

CHO. But of her sufferings what may be the cause?

NURSE. Nor know I this, for she conceals it all. 275

CHO. Beneath her malady she wastes away.

NURSE. No food for three long days hath pass'd her lips.

CHO. Through sickness this, or is she bent on death?

NURSE. From food abstaining soon her life must end.

CHO. This sure must be displeasing to her lord. 280

NURSE. She hides it all, and speaks not of her illness.

CHO. But he must mark it, when he views her face.

NURSE. It chances he is absent from this land.

CHO. Hast thou been earnest in the attempt to learn
What her disease, and what thus racks her mind? 285

NURSE. I have tried all, but vain are my attempts:
Yet shall I not ev'n now abate my zeal,
That thou mayst bear me witness with what love
I share the afflictions of my wretched queen.

O my loved child, let us forget the words 290

We each have spoke: do thou recall thy sweet

And gentle nature; clear that clouded brow;

Persist not thus: and I, if then in aught

I show'd not prompt obedience, will no more
Gainsay thee, studious of more pleasing words. 295

If thy disease be haply of those ills

Which may not be related, see these dames

Are ready to relieve it: be it such

As we to men may freely mention, speak it,

That we may call the skilful leech to bring 300

His medicinal aid. Why art thou silent?

Thou shouldst not be thus silent. Have I spoke

Amiss? reprove me: if my words are right,

Assent to them. What is it? Speak; look on me.

Unhappy me! My female friends, in vain 305

I labor, nor avail more than before.

Then my words soothed her not, nor does she now

Regard them. But know this, though thou remain
 Relentless as the sea, if thou wilt die,
 Thy sons thou wilt betray, nor will they share 310
 The rich inheritance of their father's house.
 This by the warlike Amazonian queen
 I swear; for she hath left a son to lord it
 Over thy sons, of spurious birth indeed, 314
 But true legitimate thought: thou know'st him well,
 Hippolytus.

PHÆ. Ah me!

NURSE. Doth it then touch thee?

PHÆ. Thou hast undone me: by the gods, I beg
 thee,

O, never let me hear that name again.

NURSE. Dost thou see this? Thou judgest right:
 why then

Not benefit thy sons, and save thy life? 320

PHÆ. I love my sons? another storm bursts o'er me.

NURSE. Thy hands, my child, are innocent of blood?

PHÆ. My hands are guiltless, but my heart's de-
 filed.

NURSE. Some foreign ill, brought on thee by thy
 foes?

PHÆ. I by a friend, unwilling both, am ruin'd. 325

NURSE. By some misdeed hath Theseus injured
 thee?

PHÆ. Would I were found not to have injured him!

NURSE. What dreadful thing makes thee thus wish
 to die?

PHÆ. Let me do wrong: I do no wrong to thee.

NURSE. Not willingly: in thine my will must fail.

PHÆ. What! wouldst thou force me, hanging on my
 hand? 331

NURSE. Nay, on thy knees; and never will I quit
 them.

PHÆ. Ill would befall thee, shouldst thou know these
ills.

NURSE. Can worse befall me than the loss of thee?

PHÆ. 'Twere ruin to thee, yet it brings me glory.

NURSE. Why hide it then, if useful what I ask? 336

PHÆ. Because from glory I must sink to shame.

NURSE. Speak it then, greater glory will be thine.

PHÆ. Go; by the gods, forbear, and quit my hand.

NURSE. Never, till thou indulge me this request.

PHÆ. That suppliant hand revering, I will tell
thee. 341

NURSE. 'Tis mine in silence to attend thy words.

* * * * *

PHÆ. Ah, thou, unhappy sister, wife of Bacchus!

NURSE. Why thus, my child, recall what shames thy
race? 346

PHÆ. I am the third on whom this ruin falls.

NURSE. My heart sinks in me: whither tends thy
speech?

PHÆ. Thence nothing new this misery crushes me.

NURSE. Yet know I naught of what I wish to hear.

PHÆ. Ah, wouldst thou tell me what is mine to
speak! 351

NURSE. I am no prophetess in things obscure.

PHÆ. Ah, tell me what is this, which men call love.

NURSE. The sweetest pleasure, and severest pain.

PHÆ. Taught by experience, one of them I feel. 355

NURSE. What says my child? Dost thou then love
some man?

PHÆ. Who is this son of the Amazonian queen?

NURSE. Hippolytus.

PHÆ. By thee he's named, not me.

NURSE. Ah me! what wouldst thou say? O, thou
hast made me

Most wretched. No, this is not to be borne : 360
 My female friends, shall I bear this, and live ?
 The day is hateful to me, and this light
 Is hateful : I will throw me, cast me down,
 And leave this life :—farewell, I am no more ;
 For now the wise, the modest are in love 365
 (Not willingly indeed) with ill. No god
 Is Venus then ? Nay, if there be aught else
 More potent than a god, she hath undone
 My royal mistress, me, and all the house.

CHORUS.

Didst thou hear this, didst thou hear 370
 Words unmeet to strike the ear ?
 Heard'st thou the royal dame her griefs reveal,
 Which silence should conceal ?
 O, had I died, ere thus thy friend
 Stray'd from sober reason wide : 375
 Ah me, what griefs my bosom rend,
 Griefs to human life allied !
 Fate hath pitch'd her toils around :
 Couldst thou ills like these display ?
 Why awaits thy life this day ? 380
 Some new misfortune will this house confound ;
 For Venus lights this fatal flame,
 Thou hapless Cretan dame !

PHÆ. Trœzenian dames, who this remotest verge
 Of Pelops' realms inhabit, through the long 385
 And silent night oft have my thoughts revolved
 The sad depravity of human life ;
 How prone to ill, through no defect, I think,
 Of nature : she to many gives the sense
 Of what is right ; but my reflections lead me 390
 To this conclusion ; what is good we know
 And feel, but do it not : through listlessness

Some want the spirit to act ; and some prefer
 The favorite pleasure to the work of virtue ;
 For life hath various pleasures : ill-spent hours 395
 Of frivolous conversation, indolence,
 A pleasing ill, and shame ; but there are two
 Of these, the one not ill, the other sinks
 The house in misery : were the use of each
 Clearly distinguish'd, they no more would be 400
 Two, with the self-same letters each inscribed.
 When thus with serious thought I had revolved,
 I deem'd that no allurements had the power
 To cheat my sense, and bend it to forsake
 Its honest purpose : but I will unfold 405
 The workings of my mind. Soon as I felt
 The wound of love, my thoughts were turn'd how best
 To bear it : hence in silence I conceal'd
 My pain ; for faithless is the tongue ; it knows
 To enforce the passions when discover'd, oft 410
 Working the greatest ills. My next resolve
 Was well to bear the madness, and o'ercome it
 With chaste austerity. When these avail'd not
 To vanquish love, I deem'd it noblest for me
 To die : these resolutions none will blame. 415
 For be this mine : if virtuous be my deeds,
 Let them not lie obscure ; nor, be they base,
 Let me have many to attest my shame.
 I knew how foul this fond desire, I knew
 How infamous, and as a woman well 420
 I knew in what abhorrence it is held.
 O, that she perish'd, suffering every ill,
 Who with adulterate love the nuptial bed
 First shamed ! The houses of the great gave birth
 To this disease, and thence the infection spread : 425
 For when base deeds from those of highest rank
 Receive a sanction, all below esteem them

As objects of their honest imitation.

But her I hate, whose tongue to modest phrase
Is filed, whilst thoughts of lewdness in her heart 430
She dares to harbor. Sovereign, sea-born Venus,
How can such look their husbands in the face,
Nor tremble at the darkness that assists them ;
And fear the roof, the walls should find a tongue
To publish their misdeeds ? I will not live, 435
My friends, to shame my husband and my sons :
No ; 'midst the splendor of the Athenian state
Free let them dwell, and flourish in renown,
Illustrious for their mother : for the mind,
Though form'd for noble daring, sinks enslaved, 440
When conscious of a mother's foul misdeeds,
Or of a father's : for the honest mind,
Conscious of just and virtuous thought, possesses
A worth excelling life ; and time will show
The bad distinct, as when a virgin holds 445
Her mirror : ne'er 'mongst such may I be seen !

CHO. How lovely in each state is chastity,
Which brings to mortals the sublimest fame !

NURSE. A sudden terror, lady, seized my heart
When first I heard thy griefs : I now perceive 450
My weakness ; it is ever thus : the thoughts
Draw wisdom from reflection. Nothing strange
Affects thee, nothing singular : severe
The anger of the goddess rushes on thee.
Lovest thou ? What wonder ? Many feel the force
Of love : wilt thou for this refuse to live ? 455
Ill would it fare with those that love, and those
That shall hereafter love, if they must die ;
For Venus is resistless, when she comes
In all her force ; but gentle to the heart, 460
That to her influence yields : the proud, that bids
Scornful defiance to her power, she seizes,

And, as too well thou know'st, chastises him.
She ranges through the sky, and in the sea
Commands the waves ; and all things owe their birth
To her : she sows, she gives the seeds of Love ; 466
And all, that live on earth, from him arise.
Those, who revolve the annals of old times,
And those, who tread the Muses' hallow'd haunts,
Know how the breast of Jove with Semele 470
Was once enamour'd ; to the heavenly seats,
How beauteous bright Aurora, touch'd with love,
Bore Cephalus ; yet in the skies they hold
Their seats, nor fly the assemblies of the gods,
Who hold them dear, by the same power, I ween, 475
Themselves subdued : and wilt not thou sustain it ?
Thy father on these terms must give thee life,
Or, these disliked, seek other gods that rule
By other laws. How many, dost thou think,
Men too of deepest wisdom, see their beds 480
Tainted with this disease, yet not appear
To see it ? And how many fathers aid
Their sons who love amiss ? For to conceal
What honor dares not own, is wisdom's part.
It were too nice through all the parts of life 485
To labor at exactness : on the roof,
For shelter form'd, too curious workmanship
Were lost. But in misfortune sunk, like thine,
How gain the shore ? If life hath more of good
To thee than ill, since thou art mortal, deem it 490
Well with thee. But no more of these weak thoughts,
O my dear child, no more of these reproaches :
What other than reproach can be the will
To be more perfect than the gods ? Be firm,
If love hath seized thy heart ; it is the work 495
Of love's all-powerful goddess : if it pains thee,
Try to relieve thy pain : know, there are charms,

And spells of wondrous potency to heal
This sickness of the soul: their influence
Shall give thee ease. In their inventions slow 500
Were men, but readier far is woman's skill.

CHO. What she hath urged is to thy present ill,
Phædra, most lenient; yet hast thou my praise;
That praise, perhaps, less pleasing to thine ear,
And wakes more anguish than her soothing words. 505

PHÆ. This is what ruins many a noble house,
And many a peopled town, this glozing speech.
Behoves us now no blandishment that charms
The ear, but what excites to virtuous deed.

NURSE. Wherefore this lofty strain? Thou hast not
need 510

Of fine-form'd words, but of a man; and soon
May they be known who most discreetly speak
What so concerns thee. If this malady
Touch'd not thy life, and modesty prevail'd,
I would not for thy pleasure and thy love 515
To this have led thee; but to save thy life
Is the great business: let not that find blame.

PHÆ. Fie on thy tongue! Wilt thou not close thy
lips?

Wilt thou not cease to urge thy shameful plea?

NURSE. It may be shameful, but consults for thee
Better than honor: it would save thy life, 521
In which more merit lies, than in a name,
Glorying in which it is thy wish to die.

PHÆ. Now, by the gods, (for shameful are thy words,
Though well design'd) no farther urge thy plea, 525
That, if I give my yielding soul to love,
I should do well; for though with specious phrase
Thou varnish o'er the baseness, I should fall
On that disgrace and ruin, which I fly.

NURSE. If such thy resolution, it behoved thee 530

Not from the right to deviate : but ev'n thus
 Be ruled by me ; do me this grace at least.
 I in the house have medicines, of power
 To charm the rage of love ; these to my thought
 Lately occur'd : let not thy fears prevail. 535
 They, without shame or injury to sense,
 Will ease thee of this sickness of the mind.
 But thou must have some token from the youth
 Beloved, some word, some relic of his vest,
 Of two in union close to knit one love. 540

PHÆ. An unguent, or a potion is the charm ?

NURSE. Wish not to be inform'd, my child, but
 eased.

PHÆ. Too much, I fear, thou trustest to thy wis-
 dom.

NURSE. Fear every thing, be sure : what dost thou
 fear ?

PHÆ. Lest to the son of Theseus thou disclose it. 545

NURSE. Confide in me ; my care shall order this
 Right well : do thou, O sovereign, sea-born Venus,
 Do thou but aid me ! To my friends within
 To impart the rest is all that's needful now.

PHÆDRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O love, O love, that through the eyes 550
 Instillest softly warm desire,
 Pleased in the soul, with sweet surprise,
 Entrancing rapture to inspire ;
 Never with wild, ungovern'd sway
 Rush on my heart, and force it to obey : 555
 For not the lightning's fire,
 Nor stars swift darting through the sky,
 Equal the shafts sent by this son of Jove,

When his hand gives them force to fly,
Kindling the flames of love. 560

ANTISTROPHE I.

In vain at Alpheus' stream, in vain
At bright Apollo's Pythian shrine
Doth Greece, the votive victim slain,
With reverence offer rites divine :
To him, who holds the high employ 565
To unlock the golden gates of love and joy,
No honors we assign ;
The tyrant of the human breast,
That ravages where'er he takes his way,
And sinks mankind with woes oppress'd 570
Beneath his ruthless sway.

STROPHE II.

Thee, Œchalia's blooming pride,
Virgin yet in love untried,
Ne'er before by Hymen led,
Stranger to the nuptial bed, 575
Unexperienced, hapless fair,
From thy house with wild affright
Hastening, like the frantic dame,
That to the Bacchic orgies speeds her flight,
With blood, with smoke, with flame, 580
And all the terrors wild of war,
To nuptials stain'd with gore did Venus give,
And bade Alcmena's son the beauteous prize receive.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Say, ye sacred towers that stand
Bulwarks of the Theban land ; 585

572 Iole, daughter of Eurytus, king of Œchalia, who proposed her to him that excelled in the bow, but refused her to Hercules, whose superiority was acknowledged. Hercules, *enraged at the affront*, ravaged the country, slew the sons of *Eurytus*, and seized the lady.

And ye streams, that welling play
 From the fount of Dirce, say
 How to you came the queen of love :
 'Midst the lightning's rapid fire,
 Whilst around her thunders roar, 590
 She caused the blasted Semele to expire,
 The hapless nymph that bore
 Bacchus from the embrace of Jove.
 Thus over all she spreads her tyrant power,
 As restless as the bee that roves from flower to flower.

PHÆ. Be silent, O my friends. I am undone. 596

CHO. What is there dreadful, Phædra, in thy house?

PHÆ. Forbear, that I may hear their words within.

CHO. Thy words forebode some ill: but I am dumb.

PHÆ. Ah me, unhappy me, how great my woes! 600

CHO. What mean these lamentations? Why this
 voice

Of sorrow? Tell us, lady, what thou hearest,
 That with this sudden terror strikes thy heart.

PHÆ. O, ruin, ruin! Stand you at the door,
 And hear what tumult in the house is raised. 605

CHO. Thou standest nigh the door; and from the
 house

Issuing the voice comes to thy ear: but tell me,
 Tell me, what dreadful ill hath happen'd there.

PHÆ. The son of that fierce Amazon is loud;
 And, high in anger, 'gainst my servant raves. 610

CHO. I hear his voice, but to my ear his words
 Come not distinct: to thine they come, to thine
 The doors transmit what in the house he speaks.

PHÆ. He calls her vile procuress, her lord's bed
 Falsely betraying; that I hear distinct. 615

CHO. Alas for thy unhappy fate! Loved queen,
 Thou art betray'd. What counsel shall I give thee?

The secrets of thy soul are all disclosed,
And thou art ruin'd, by thy friends betray'd.

PHÆ. Yes, she hath told my griefs, and so undone
me: 620

To ease, to heal the sickness of my soul,
Friendly her purpose, but dishonorable.

CHO. What then, unhappy sufferer, wilt thou do?

PHÆ. I know not, save one thing; forthwith to die:
Death is the only cure of all my ills. 625

PHÆDRA, HIPPOLYTUS, NURSE, CHORUS.

HIP. O parent Earth, and thou all-seeing Sun,
What words of horrid import have I heard!

NURSE. Ah, speak no more, lest some one mark thy
words.

HIP. Not speak, mine ears thus wounded with thy
baseness? 630

NURSE. Nay, I conjure thee by this beauteous hand.

HIP. Away, keep off thy hands, touch not my robes.

NURSE. Thus at thy knees I beg undo me not.

HIP. Why, since thou say'st thou hast spoke no-
thing ill?

NURSE. Affairs like this may not be told to all.

HIP. Things honest may with honor be made known.

NURSE. Ah, do not rashly violate thine oath. 636

HIP. My tongue indeed hath sworn, but not my
mind.

NURSE. What wilt thou do? In ruin sink thy
friends?

HIP. I scorn you, nor hold friendship with the base.

NURSE. Forgive me: human weakness oft must err.

HIP. Wherefore, O Jove, beneath the sun's fair
light 641

That specious mischief, woman, didst thou place?
For with the human race if thou wouldst fill

The peopled earth, no need they should be raised
 From woman : at thy shrines might men present 645
 Iron, or brass, or heaps of massy gold,
 To purchase children, in proportion given
 To the rich offering, man might then have lived
 Free and uncumber'd with this female burden ;
 But now, to lead this mischief to our house, 650
 Our wealth must be expended. Hence appears
 How great a mischief woman is to man :
 The father who begot her, bred her up,
 Gives her a dowry, to another house
 Consigning her, to rid him of the ill : 655
 He, who receives the baleful ill, rejoices,
 Adding each splendid ornament, and robes
 Elaborately nice the enchanting image,
 Unhappy, all the riches of his house
 On her exhausting. Is the alliance form'd 660
 With those of noble rank ? He must perforce
 Keep with apparent joy the uneasy bed.
 Or finds he in his choice domestic sweets,
 But to the ignoble and the base allied ?
 That evil he suppresses with the good. 665
 Happier who 'scapes both these, and to his house
 Leads a plain, gentle-manner'd, simple wife.
 I hate the knowing dame, nor in my house
 Be one more wise than woman ought to be :
 For Venus in these knowing dames with ease 670
 Engenders wiles ; from all which folly far
 Simplicity removes the unplotting wit.
 But female servant never on the wife
 Should be attendant : let them rather dwell
 With animals that want the power of speech ; 675
 That they may neither have with whom to talk,
 Nor hear their conversation in return :
 But now the wicked mistress in the house

Contrives her wicked purpose, and abroad
 The base attendant bears the lewd design. 680
 So thou, vile wretch, art come to me, to form
 Detested commerce with my father's bed,
 Too holy to be touch'd : thy impure words
 Pollute my ears, and in the living stream
 They must be cleansed : how then should I commit 685
 A villainy, when but to hear it named
 Defiles me ? But know this, my piety
 Protects thee, woman : had I not been caught
 At unawares, bound by a sacred oath,
 I never could have held me from disclosing 690
 This to my father. But the house, while Theseus
 Is absent from his country, I will leave :
 Yet shall my lips be closed : when he returns,
 I with him will return ; then shall I see
 How you will look my father in the face, 695
 Thou, and thy mistress ; I shall know you both,
 Conscious of your attempts. Perdition seize you !
 My soul can never have its fill of hate
 Towards women, though I always speak my hate,
 For they are always wicked. Either see 700
 That some one forms your sex to modesty,
 Or let me always taunt you with reproach.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

CHOR. How wretched, how unfortunate the state
 Of women ! Disappointed of our hopes,
 What skill, what prudence can instruct us now 705
 To free thee from the inextricable toils ?

PHÆ. This punishment is just. O earth ! O light !
 How shall I shun my fate, or how, my friends,
 Conceal this ill ? What god will deign to aid,
 What mortal would appear confederate, 710
 Or favoring deeds of baseness ? From this ill

Life hath no refuge ; and you see me here,
The most distress'd, most wretched of her sex.

CHO. Ruin indeed hangs o'er thee ; naught avail'd
Thy servant's artful trains ; but all falls ill. 716

PHÆ. Vile wretch, thou base corrupter of thy
friends,
What mischief hast thou wrought me ? May great
Jove,

The author of my race, with lightning blast thee,
And sweep thee from the earth ! Did I not charge thee
(For I perceived thy purpose) to be silent 720

Of what afflicts me now ? But thou thy tongue
Couldst not restrain ; I therefore shall not die
With glory : new resolves must now be form'd ;
For he, inflamed with rage, will to his father
Disclose my fault, to aged Pittheus tell 725

My miseries, and all the country round
Spread the reproachful story. Perish thou,
And all like thee, that by inglorious means
Are prompt to aid their friends against their will !

NURSE. Thou, lady, I confess, hast cause to blame
What I have done amiss ; for what afflicts thee 731

O'erpowers cool discretion. Yet this plea,
Wouldst thou admit it, I might urge ; thy years
Of infancy I nurtured, and my heart

Glow with affection towards thee : for thy pains 735
I sought medicinal relief, but found

What least I wish'd : had I succeeded well,
I had been reckon'd 'mongst the wise : our minds
Are so disposed, to judge from the event.

PHÆ. Are these things just ? Bring they redress, to
engage, 740

When thou hast pierced my heart, in vain harangues ?

NURSE. I urge the plea no more : I was not wise :
Yet hence some means of safety may be found.

PHÆ. I 'll hear no more : thou couldst before advise
 What honor sickens at, and thy attempts 745
 Were base : begone, and of thyself take care :
 For me, as honor dictates I shall act.
 Ye generous daughters of Trœzene, now
 Grant me one poor request ; give me your faith,
 In silence to conceal what you have heard. 750

CHO. Daughter of Jove, revered Diana, hear
 My oath : I never will disclose thine ill.

PHÆ. 'Tis nobly said. Yet one thing have I found,
 Revolving deep, to alleviate these illa,
 That to my children I may add a life 755
 Of glory, and in this affliction give
 Myself relief: for never will I shame
 My Cretan lineage ; never will I come
 Into the presence of the royal Theseus,
 Stain'd with this baseness, for a single life. 760

CHO. What desperate deed dost thou intend to do ?

PHÆ. To die ; but how, this will I ponder well.

CHO. Talk not thus wildly.

PHÆ. And be thy advice
 Less wild. Since Venus has decreed my fall,
 This day, by quitting life I will delight her, 765
 And yield to cruel love the victory.
 Yet to another shall my death be cause
 Of ill ; that he may learn not to be proud
 At my afflictions, but by sharing them
 Be taught a lesson of humanity. 770

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O had I, on some rock's rude height,
 Amidst its cliffs a place,
 To wing from thence my airy flight
 One of the feather'd race,

HIPPOLYTUS.

239

High would I rise the billows o'er
Which Adria breaks against the shore;

775

Or to the sorrow-streaming Po,
Where Phaëton, the lost, the loved,
His sisters mourn, by pity moved,
And bid their ceaseless tears, beside
Their mournful father's purple tide,
In drops of lucid amber flow;

780

ANTISTROPHE I.

Or to the famed Hesperian plains,
Whose rich trees bloom with gold,
To join the grief-attuned strains,

785

My winged progress hold;
Beyond whose shores no passage gave
The ruler of the purple wave;

But Atlas stands his stately height,
The awful boundary of the skies:
There fountains of ambrosia rise,
Watering the seat of Jove: her stores
Luxuriant there the rich soil pours,
All, which the sense of gods delight.

790

STROPHE II.

Ah Cretan bark! thy snowy sails,

795

The roaring ocean o'er,
With pride expanding to the gales,

My queen in triumph bore
From seats of happiness, to know
The sharpest pangs of nuptial wo:

800

For, when she left the Gnossian land,
She flew, misfortune in her train,
To splendid Athens o'er the main:
With all ill omens on her way
She moor'd in the Munychian bay,
And fix'd her foot on the Attic strand.

805

ANTISTROPHE II.

For there with wild unhallow'd fires,
 The fierce disease of love,
 Cithera's queen her soul inspires,
 Tumultuous rage to move : 810
 And now, with painful ills oppress'd,
 Despair and anguish rend her breast ;
 Hence to the last relief she flies :
 Awed by the ungentle goddess, round
 Her snowy neck the noose is bound : 815
 Anxious to guard her honest fame,
 And quench love's sorrow-kindling flame,
 That blazes in her breast, she dies.

SER. Help, quickly help, all that are near the house :
 [within]

The queen, the wife of Theseus, is no more. 820

CHO. Ah me ! the deed is done : the fatal noose
 Is tied : this royal lady is no more.

SER. Will you not haste ? Will you not bring the
 steel

Sharp-edged, to cut this bond which girds her neck ?

SEM. What shall we do, my friends ? Enter the
 house, 825

And from the queen unloose this strangling cord ?

What ! are no active servants there ? Through life
 A busy forwardness I deem unsafe.

SER. Lay straight the wretched corse, with decency
 Composed, a mournful office for my lords. 830

CHO. The hapless lady, as I hear, is dead ;
 Already as a corse they lay her forth.

THESEUS, CHORUS.

THE. Know you, ye females, why this voice of wo

my house? For loud my servants' cries
 nor deigns my house with open gates 835
 my return, and greet its lord.
 the age of Pittheus aught of ill?
 far advanced in the decline of life,
 be grieved to lose him from my house. 839
 These sorrows for the aged are not raised :
 ing will grieve thee, Theseus, by their death.
 Ah me! my children, are they robb'd of life?
 They live, their mother, (most to grieve thee,)
 dead.

My wife! Say'st thou my wife? By what
 mischance?

Around her neck she fix'd the fatal cord. 845

With grief o'erpower'd, or some calamity?

Thus much we know : but lately to thy house,
 I come, to wail thy miseries.

Wretch that I am, why longer am I crown'd
 with these enwoven branches, from the shrine 850

an ill hour return'd? Unbar the gates,

servants; haste, that I my poor lost wife

may see, who by her death hath made me wretched.

ENO. Ill-fated queen, o'erwhelm'd with miseries,
 Severely hast thou suffer'd : thou hast done 855

A deed, that in confusion sinks this house,

Who with unhallow'd violence hast rush'd

On death, the unhappy work of thine own hands.

What cruel fate darkens thy wretched life?

THE. How dreadful are my sufferings, which for thee,
 My dear, lost wife, I feel! Of all my ills 861

850 It was usual for any one who had gone to consult the oracle of Apollo to return crowned with the laurel of the god; and all his family went forth to meet him, and congratulated his arrival.

854 The doors are here opened, and the body of the queen discovered, the servants standing round it.

These are the worst. O Fortune, with what weight
 Of misery dost thou crush me, and my house !
 This is a stain, fix'd by some vengeful power,
 Surpassing thought : all that remains of life 865
 Must waste away in anguish : such a sea
 Of wo swells o'er me, never can I rise
 Again, or stem the surge of this affliction.—
 How dismal ! with what words shall I address
 (Wretch that I am !) thee, and thy cruel fate, 870
 Unhappy ? Like a bird, thou from my hand
 Art gone, and seen no more ; thy mournful flight,
 Mournful to me, wing'd to the realms beneath.
 Wo, wo, wo, wo, intolerable wo !
 For what misdeeds of old, for what offence 875
 Against the gods by those of former times
 Are these calamities now heap'd on me ?

CHO. Not thee alone, O king, these ills befall :
 With many hast thou lost a much-loved wife.

THE. Low in the earth, low in the darksome earth
 To have my mansion in the shade of death, 881
 Is now my wish, since I no more enjoy
 Thy dearest converse : me hast thou destroy'd
 More than thyself. What cause, unhappy woman,
 Whence may I learn the fatal cause, that urged 885
 Thy heart to this sad deed ? Speak, some of you,
 What hath befallen ; or doth this royal house
 Shelter beneath its roof this numerous train
 Of servants for no purpose ? Wretched me,
 For thy sake wretched, how distress'd to see 890
 These sorrows of my house, not to be borne,
 Not to be utter'd ! But my all is lost,
 My house is desolate, my children orphans.

CHO. O, thou hast left us, left us desolate,
 Dearest of women, thou most excellent 895
 Of all, whom in its course yon splendid sun

Surveys, or through the night the glittering moon
 Wheeling her course ! Ill-fated queen, what woes
 Afflict thy house ! Mine eyes are wet with tears,
 That flow for thy misfortunes ; and yet more 900
 I tremble for the ills that must succeed.

THE. Forbear, forbear. What is that letter, hung
 From her loved hand ? Will it not tell me something ?
 This letter 'midst her sorrows did she write ;
 Perchance some dear request or for her bed, 905
 Or for her children : be thou confident,
 Henceforth no woman shares the bed or house
 Of Theseus. Though, ah me ! thou art no more,
 Yet the impression of thy golden ring
 Is flattering to me : let me then burst ope 910
 The seal, and read what thou hast given in charge.

CHO. Alas ! alas ! ill after ill the god
 Brings on us : life is therefore irksome to me
 Through what is done ; for ruin'd, and no more,
 Deem I, alas, the house of my loved lords. 915
 Stern power, if it be possible, yet spare
 This house ; o'erturn it not ; thy suppliant hear ;
 Hear my petition : but my boding mind
 Presages, as a prophet, naught but ill.

THE. Past utterance, past endurance, what an ill
 Rolls on the former ill ! Unhappy me ! 921

CHO. What may this be ? If I may know it, tell
 me.

THE. This letter hath a voice, a dreadful voice.
 Ah, whither shall I fly, to shun this weight
 Of ills that sinks me ? What, ah, what a cry 925
 Sounds from this letter ! Wretched, wretched me !

CHO. Ah me ! thou utterest words that point to ill.

THE. My lips no longer shall in silence hold
 This unexampled, this destructive ill :
 But, O my country, O my country, hear it. 930
 Hippolytus hath dared to touch my bed

By violence, revering not the eye,
 The awful eye of Jove. But, O my father,
 O Neptune, who long since hast promised me
 To grant me three requests, this shall be one ; 935
 Destroy my son : O, let him not escape
 This day, if thou wilt ratify thy promise.

CHO. Now, by the gods, O king, recall those words :
 Hereafter, trust me, thou wilt know thy error.

THE. They shall not be recall'd : nay, I will drive
 him 940

Far from this land : two fates hang over him,
 And one shall crush him ; either Neptune's power,
 Moved by my imprecations, to the house
 Of death shall hurl him ; or an exile hence,
 And wandering wretched in a foreign land, 945
 He shall be rest of all the joys of life.

CHO. But see, Hippolytus himself, thy son,
 Comes opportunely : royal Theseus, calm
 This passion which transports thee, and consult
 How best to advance the welfare of thy house. 950

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, CHORUS.

HIP. I heard thy cry, my father, and am come
 With speed ; but what the cause of these loud plaints
 I know not : this from thee I wish to learn.—
 Ha ! what a sight is here ! I see thy wife,
 My father, dead : I marvel much at this ; 955
 For late I left her, very late I left her
 In the fair light of heaven. What hath befallen her ?
 How died she ? This I wish to learn from thee,
 My father. Thou art silent : in afflictions
 No good can silence work ; for, through desire 960
 Of knowing all, the heart is form'd to feel
 In ills ev'n an avidity to hear.
 Behoves not then from friends, nay more than friends,
 To hide, my father, what afflicts thy soul.

THE. Misjudging men, in many things employ'd 965
In vain, why do you learn a thousand arts,
With thought profound contrive, devise, invent?
But one thing know you not, nor seek to know;
To teach him wisdom who is void of sense!

HIP. He were a master sophist, who could force
Those to be wise that have nor soul nor sense 971
To apprehend: but so much out of time
These quaint discussions, father, that I fear
Through too much grief thy tongue at random errs.

THE. Well were it if we had some certain mark 975
To note our friends; what would distinctly show
Their minds, the faithful from the counterfeit:
Or that each mortal had two voices, one
The utterance of right, of aught besides
The other; that the speech, to mischief framed, 980
And foul injustice, by the voice of right
Convicted, we no more might be deceived.

HIP. Hath some false friend accused me to thy ear?
In nothing am I conscious of the charge.
I am astonish'd; for thy words, which swerve 985
From temperate reason wide, astonish me.

THE. To what an height will human madness rise!
Where will its impious daring fix its bounds?
If each succeeding age gains strength, and swell
With ranker villany, so that the last 990
Exceeds the measure of the crimes forepass'd,
Another earth it will behove the gods
To adjoin to this, fit mansion to receive
Apart this wicked and nefarious race.
But turn your eyes on him; he is my son, 995
Yet hath he stain'd my bed, by her that lies
In death convicted of his villany.
Show then (since this inexpressible guilt
Is thine) before thy father show thy face.

Dost thou, as one of higher excellence, 1000
 Hold converse with the gods? Art thou then chaste?
 Art thou unstain'd with guilt? Such proud pretence
 Persuades not me; so should I charge the gods
 As ignorant and blind. Now boast, now truck
 For vain applause; guiltless of blood, prepare 1005
 The vegetable viands, in the lore
 Of Orpheus train'd; pretend the Bacchic rites,
 And of much learning raise the illusive smoke:
 Now thou art caught. But such to shun, my voice
 To all gives warning; for with specious words 1010
 They seek to ensnare, and hide their base designs.
 She's dead; in that thou deem'st thy safety lies:
 But, thou vile wretch, most clearly are thy crimes
 By that discover'd: for what oath, what words
 Can be more strong than this, and prove thee guiltless?
 But thou wilt say, she hated thee, and urge 1015
 The abhorrence of a stepdame to the son
 Sprung from a former bed: an ill exchange
 Thou must allow it, if, through hate of thee,
 She barter'd life, and all she held most dear. 1020
 But loose desires taint not the hearts of men,
 Which uncontroll'd in women hold dominion.
 Yet have I known young men not more secure
 Than women, when their warm blood Venus fires;
 And the bold plea, that they are men, avails them.
 But wherefore waste I words on such a wretch? 1026

1007 Orpheus is one of the most celebrated characters of antiquity. His excellence in music was his least praise; he was the inventor of medicine, and the father of philosophy: versed in the theology of Egypt, he introduced many of their religious rites and mystic initiations into Greece, particularly the orgies of Bacchus. He taught to abstain from animal food, perhaps in his legislative capacity, as the only means of preventing the savage Thracians, whom he civilised, from eating human flesh.

Hence, from this land to exile get thee gone,
 Nor dare in heaven-built Athens set thy foot,
 Nor on the coasts that own my regal power.
 If, injured thus, with pity I were moved, 1030
 No more the Isthmian Sinis would attest
 He fell by me, but that my vaunts are vain :
 Nor would the savage Sciron's sea-beat rocks
 Proclaim my vengeance to the bad severe.

CHO. I know not whom of mortal race to call 1035
 Happy : what once was so, subverted falls.

HIP. This violence, this transport of thy soul
 Is dreadful : yet this charge, which has the face
 Of many proofs, were it unfolded well,
 Would be found void of truth. I have no skill 1040
 To glose a set speech to the multitude,
 But to my equals, and a few, more prompt :
 And this is something ; for the futile, held
 Worthless among the wise, their rattling tongues
 Roll on, attuned to charm the multitude. 1045
 Yet in this evil plight I must perforce
 Unlock my lips ; and where begin, but where
 Thy charge assail'd me, deeming I must fall
 Without excuse ? Seest thou this light, this earth ?
 In these is not a man, howe'er thy voice 1050
 Dissents, more pure than I am. To revere
 The gods is my first knowlege, and my friends
 To treat with kindness, such as harbor not
 A thought of wrong, too modest to propose
 Aught ill, or minister to deeds of baseness. 1055
 I never make unseemly jest of those
 That share my converse, to my absent friends
 The same as to the present : in one point,
 Wherein my guilt is now deem'd manifest,
 Of virgin purity ; for to this day 1060
 I am a *stranger* to the couch of love ;

Nor know I of its rites more than the tale
May have inform'd me, or the painter's pencil
Presented to mine eye ; yet on such picture
Dwells not mine eye delighted, for my mind 1065
Is as a virgin's pure. But thee perchance,
My pure and virgin modesty persuades not :
Behoves thee then to show what powerful cause
Seduced it. Had she beauty, had she charms
Superior to her sex ? Or in thy house, 1070
Sharing thy bed, could I have hope to dwell ?
How vain and senseless this ! but sovereign power
Hath charms ev'n for the wise. Far otherwise
I deem, unless that sovereign power hath first
Corrupted those whom it hath charms to please. 1075
Excelling in each manly exercise
Practised in Greece, I wish'd to be the first ;
And second in the state among my friends,
Men of the best and noblest minds, to live
Happy ; for happiness is hence insured, 1080
And danger hence departing leaves a grace
Superior to the charms of royalty.
One plea hath not been urged ; thou hast the rest :
If I had one to witness what I am,
If she could view the light of heav'n, whilst thus 1085
I urge my just defence, thy searching mind
Would see the guilty. Now by Jove, whose power
The oath attests, and by the solid Earth
I swear, that never did I touch thy bed,
Never desired it, never form'd the thought. 1090
Inglorious may I perish, lost to fame,
Lost to my country and my father's house,
A wandering exile ; neither may the sea
Receive me, nor the earth, when vital breath
Forsakes these limbs, if I am stain'd with guilt. 1095
Whether through fear she hath destroy'd her life,

I know not: more than this I may not speak.
Chaste was thy wife, unable to be chaste;
That power is mine, but it avails me not.

CHO. Enough thou hast said to acquit thee of the
charge, 1100

Giving the sacred sanction of an oath.

THE. Does he not trust in charms and dazzling spells,
Thus confident to work upon my mind,
After such insults, with fair seeming oaths?

HIP. In this, my father, much I marvel at thee:
Was I thy father, and wast thou my son, 1106
I would have kill'd thee, not have driven thee forth
To exile, hadst thou dared to touch my wife.

THE. That were most just: but thus thou shalt not
die,
As 'gainst thyself thou hast pronounced the law: 1110
For to the tortured death that quickly comes
Brings ease: but, exiled from thy country, drag
In a strange land thy miserable life,
A vagabond: be this the villain's meed.

HIP. What wilt thou do? Ah me, wilt thou not
wait 1115

What in my favor time may bring to light,
But thus impetuous drive me from the land?

THE. Beyond the ocean, the Atlantic bounds
Beyond, had I the power; so much I hate thee.

HIP. Wilt thou, nor oath, nor faith, nor augur's
voice, 1120

In proof essay'd, drive me unjudged away?

THE. This letter, which no formal process waits,
With truth condemns thee: to the birds, that wing
Their flight above our heads, I pay no heed.

HIP. Why, O ye gods! should I not ope my lips,
Ruin'd by you whom I revere? Not so: 1125
Nor should I so persuade those whom I ought,

But violate a solemn oath in vain.

THE. I cannot bear thy seeming sanctity :
Hence, from thy country get thee gone with speed.

HIP. Whither? Ah me, what hospitable house 1131
On such a charge an exile will receive me?

THE. Such as delights to harbor those that stain
The nuptial bed, vile inmate with the vile.

HIP. Ah me, this wounds my heart, this draws my
tears, 1135

That I appear as vile, so deem'd by thee.

THE. Thou shouldst have groan'd, shouldst have
consider'd this

Before, when thou daredst wrong thy father's wife.

HIP. O house, hadst thou a voice, couldst thou but
speak,

And witness for me that no guilt is mine! 1140

THE. Fliest thou to speechless witnesses? This letter

Shows, though it speaks not, clearly shows thy guilt.

HIP. O could I but stand opposite, and view
Myself, how should I weep at these afflictions?

THE. More to regard thyself hath been thy wont,
Than to revere thy parents, and be just. 1146

HIP. Unhappy mother, mournful was my birth!
Never may friend of mine a stepdame know.

THE. Drag him hence, slaves: heard ye not my
command

Long since, that he should have no harbor here? 1150

HIP. Not one of them will touch me without tears:
Drive me thyself, if such thy purpose, hence.

THE. I will, if my commands thou disobey:
No pity for thy exile touches me.

HIPPOLYTUS, CHORUS.

HIP. I see it is determined: wretched me! 1155

I know indeed, but know not how to speak.
 Chaste daughter of Latona, of the gods
 Most dear to me, associate in my haunts,
 And in the chase, far from the splendid towers
 Of Athens will we fly. Farewell, thou seat 1160
 Where once Eretheus ruled; loved land, fare-
 well.

And thou, Troezene, rich in the delights
 That win our lively youth to stay with thee,
 Farewell: I never shall behold thee more,
 And never more address thee. Come, ye youths,
 Companions of my sports whilst here I stay, 1166
 Bid me a last farewell, and through your land
 Conduct my steps; for one you ne'er shall see
 More chaste, though otherwise my father deems.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When Misfortune's cruel hand 1170
 Arms the shaft my heart to wound,
 Then my soul, with thought profound,
 Owns the gods' protecting power,
 And my sorrows are no more.
 Nursed in this sacred lore 1175
 Hope assumes her silent stand:
 But when strong before her eyes
 Real scenes of life arise,
 She sinks, she fades away;
 For, inconstant as the wind, 1180
 Fate and Fortune whirl mankind
 In tumult and dismay.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Hear, ye gods, your suppliant hear:
 Happy be my humble state,
 Nor unknown to wealth my fate. 1185

Let me not oppress'd complain,
 Growing old 'midst sorrow's train,
 With slow-consuming pain.

Let not glory charm mine ear,
 But be mine a modest fame, 1190
 Free from guilt and free from blame.
 Far from unsocial strife,
 Let not rigor sour my breast;
 But, with gentle manners bless'd,
 Be mine a peaceful life. 1195

STROPHE II.

But no more this calm is here :
 Hope is mine no more, nor peace,
 Since this brightest star of Greece,
 Sinking from the Attic skies
 On a distant land to rise, 1200
 Is vanish'd from mine eyes ;
 Such his father's wrath severe.
 O'er Trœzene's sandy shore,
 Up the woodland heights no more
 Shalt thou pursue the chase ; 1205
 Nor Dictynna, huntress maid,
 Whilst thy fleet hounds pierce the glade,
 Delight thy sports to grace.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Now no more in youthful pride
 Shalt thou with the ruling rein 1210
 Thy Henetian coursers train ;
 Teach their managed necks to bear
 Round the ring the rapid car,
 The lake's green margin near,
 And their measured motions guide. 1215
 In thy father's house no more
 Shall the Muse her transports pour,
 No more her sweet voice breathe ;

HIPPOLYTUS.

253

Nor, to deck her green retreats,
O'er Diana's sylvan seats
Shall hang the flowery wreath.

1220

EPODE.

At thy unhappy flight each nymph shall sigh,
Nor more their rival contests know,
Lost as thou art to each desiring eye.

In many a stream my tears shall flow,
And Pity for thy fate impart
Her softer influence to my heart.

1225

Ah wretched mother, all thy pain
In giving this thy son to light was vain!
O, I am angry with the gods.

1230

Ye Graces, sweet-according band,
Why have you sent him from these loved abodes?
No baseness to his soul was known,
But Virtue mark'd him for her own.
Why have you forced him from his native land?

1235

But see, the attendant of Hippolytus,
Grief on his brow, with hasty step advances.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Where shall I find the royal Theseus? Say,
Ye females, have you seen him enter here?

CHO. See, from the house, as thou couldst wish, he
comes.

1240

THESEUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Theseus, I bring thee tidings, that must claim
Sorrow from thee and from thy citizens,
Be they of Athens or of Træzene's state.

THE. What may this be? Hath aught of sudden ill,
Alarming to these neighboring towns, befallen?

1245

MES. Hippolytus is dead, to speak in brief,

Or draws his last short breath of vital air.

THE. Whence this? The vengeance of some injured husband,

Whose wife he, as his father's, stain'd by force?

MES. By his own car destroy'd and thy request,
Thy imprecations to thy father made, 1251
The monarch of the main, against thy son.

THE. O gods! Now, Neptune, thou art proved in deed

My father, rightly hast thou heard my prayers.

But say, how perish'd he? how did the mace 1255
Of Justice crush him for his wrongs to me?

MES. We on the margin of the wave-wash'd shore
His coursers held, and comb'd their flowing manes,
Weeping; for one had come with tidings to us
That on this land Hippolytus no more 1260
Must set his foot, by thy severe decree
A wretched exile. He too came, and brought
The same sad sentence to us on the strand:
Not unattended; for a numerous train
Of youths, his loved associates, follow'd him. 1265

After some time, mastering his griefs, he spoke,—

'What boots it to lament? My father's bidding

Must be obey'd: my servants, quickly yoke

My coursers to the car; this is a city

For me no more.' Each to his office thence 1270

Hasten'd, and in an instant to our lord

We led his coursers harness'd: from the nave

He snatch'd the reins, and sprung into the seat,

Then to the gods stretch'd forth his hands, and said,—

'If ever baseness stain'd my heart, O Jove, 1275

May I no longer breathe this vital air;

And let my father know how much he wrongs me,

Whether I die, or view the light of heaven.'

Then lash'd his steeds: attendant on our lord,

We follow near the reins, the way to Argos 1280
 Leading and Epidaurus. When we reach'd
 The tract of desert where our shore swells high
 'Gainst the Saronic gulf, a roaring sound
 Came o'er the earth, loud as the voice of Jove,
 Horrid to hear: the coursers toss'd their heads 1285
 High, and towards heaven erect their ears: our train,
 Trembling like children, marvell'd whence the noise
 Proceeded: to the sea-beat shore we cast
 Our eyes, and saw a wave so vast, it swell'd
 Reaching the skies, that to our view were lost 1290
 The cliffs of Sciron, and the Isthmus now
 No more appear'd, no more appear'd the rocks
 Of Esculapius: swelling on, and round
 Dashing its roaring foam, on the high tide
 It reach'd the shore close to the harness'd car; 1295
 There from its rolling and tempestuous flood
 Cast forth a bull, a monster wild and vast,
 Whose horrid bellows through the affrighted land
 Resounded: such a hideous sight the eye
 Could not endure. A dreadful terror seized 1300
 The starting horses; and their lord, much train'd
 In all equestrian lore, in his strong hand
 Held firm the reins: like one that at the oar
 Bends backward, backward so he bent, and drew
 The straiten'd reins. Champing their iron bits, 1305
 They rush impetuous on, nor guiding hand,
 Nor straiten'd rein, nor well-compacted car
 Regard: if to the level plain his wheels
 He guided, there, to force him back, the bull
 Appear'd before him, and the maddening steeds 1310

1293 Before the entrance of Epidaurus stood the temple of
 Esculapius, whose sacred inclosure was on every side sur-
 rounded with mountains: on one of these, called Pitthion, he
 was said to have been exposed when an infant.

Affrighted ; on the rough rocks if they rush'd
 With wild and frantic flight, approaching nigh,
 In silence he accompanied the car ;
 Till, dash'd against a crag, the clashing wheel
 High bounding cast him headlong from his seat. 1315
 All then was foul disorder ; upward flew
 The pierced nave and the axle's point infix'd.
 The unhappy youth, inexplicably bound
 Amidst the tangling harness, ('gainst the rocks
 His dear head dash'd, his flesh all rent,) was heard
 With lamentable voice to address his steeds ;— 1321
 ' Stop, O my coursers, mindful that these hands
 Have fed you in my stalls ; destroy me not :
 How dreadful is my father's imprecation !
 Is no one nigh, no one to save a man 1325
 Of unstain'd innocence ? ' Though many wish'd,
 We were left far behind, and our best speed
 Was slow. He, disengaged, I know not how,
 From the rent harness, falls, a little life
 Yet breathing : but the steeds were seen no more, 1330
 Nor the potentous bull, I know not where
 Conceal'd among the crags that rise around.
 I in thy house am a poor slave, O king,
 Yet never shall my breast harbor the thought,
 Or be persuaded that thy son was base ; 1335
 Not though the universal race of women
 Should hang themselves, and every pine of Ida
 Were fill'd with letters, for I know him pure.

CHO. Alas, alas, these new calamities
 Have their completion : there is no redress 1340
 From fate, no refuge from necessity.

THE. So much I hate the wretch who suffer'd this,
 I had a pleasure in thy words ; but now
 I reverence the gods, and him, because
 He was my son ; I therefore from these ills 1345

Receive no pleasure, and receive no grief.

MES. Not to offend thee, whither shall we bear
The unhappy youth, what office shall we pay him?
Yet, might my wish prevail, thou wilt not be
Ungentle, 'midst his sufferings, to thy son. 1350

THE. Bring him before me; I would see him; now,
Since he disown'd the foul stain to my bed,
My words shall charge his baseness home upon him,
Convicted by this vengeance of the gods.

CHORUS.

'Tis thine, O Venus, to control 1355
The stubborn and reluctant soul,
And gods and men confess thy sway:
Whilst, proud his painted plumage to display,
Round, thy son, with nimble flight,
Sportive waves his pennons light, 1360
Flies o'er the earth, and o'er the roaring main.
Where'er the glittering wanton roves,
He spreads the triumphs of his reign;
Spreads them the mountain savage o'er,
That soften'd growls his horrid loves; 1365
Spreads them o'er all that haunt the woods,
Or gambol in the floods.
All, that the sun's bright beams display,
And man, imperial Venus, feel thy power,
And homage to their sovereign pay. 1370

DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

DIA. Son of the noble Ægeus, I command thee,
Hear me; the virgin daughter of Latona,
Diana, speaks to thee. Why, Theseus, why,
Unhappy, hast thou joy in these events?
Thy son not justly hast thou slain, deceived 1375
By thy wife's falsehood; dark the charge, but clear
R

Thy fatal loss : deep in the shades below
 Wilt thou not hide, with shame depress'd, thy head ;
 Or take thee wings, and mount into the air
 From this disastrous ruin ? With good men 1380
 Never, thou never canst hold converse more.
 Hear, Theseus, of what quality thy ills :
 Not that my words to aught of good avail,
 Yet they will grieve thee. But for this I came,
 To show thee that the spirit of thy son 1385
 Was just, and that he perish'd through his sense
 Of honor ; that thy wife was stung to madness,
 Yet had it something generous ; for, her heart
 Inflamed by Venus, of the gods to me
 Most hateful, and to virgin modesty, 1390
 She loved thy son ; she tried to o'ercome her love
 By reason, but, against her will betray'd,
 She chose to perish ; for her wily nurse
 Reveal'd her passion to the youth, but first
 Bound him by oath ; but he, to virtue firm, 1395
 Gave to her words no ear ; and though by thee
 Much wrong'd, through reverence to the gods his oath
 He would not violate. She fear'd her shame
 Would be divulged, which to prevent, she wrote
 That fraudulent letter, won thy easy faith, 1400
 And by her forged device destroy'd thy son.

THE. Unhappy me !

DIA. Does it then gall thee, Theseus ?
 This is not all : be silent, and attend.
 Well was it known to thee, that three requests
 Were by thy father ratified ; of these, 1405
 One, thou most vile of men, on thy son's head
 Call'd vengeance, better for some foe reserved.
 The monarch of the sea, though his intent
 To thee was friendly, granted thy request,
 As by his promise bound : he now must deem thee,

I too must deem thee, alienate from good ; 1411
 For neither faith, nor augur's voice, nor proof
 Didst thou await, nor give a little time
 To thought ; but with unseemly haste didst call 1414
 This vengeance on thy son, which hath destroy'd him.

THE. O might I perish with him, virgin queen !

DIA. Things dreadful hast thou done, yet may they
 find

Forgiveness ; for, her heart inflamed with rage,
 So Venus will'd ; and 'mongst the gods this law
 Is firm ; none wishes to oppose the intent 1420
 Dear to another, but we always yield
 Each to the other's will : else, be assured,
 But, through my awe of Jove, this foul disgrace
 I had not suffer'd, that of all the race
 Of mortal men, the dearest to my soul 1425
 I should permit to perish. But thy fault
 Hath ignorance for its plea, and stands excused
 From aught of malice ; and thy wife by death
 Cut off the proof of words, to win belief.
 These evils then burst chiefly on thy head, 1430
 And grief on me : for when the righteous fall,
 The gods rejoice not ; but in ruin sink
 The guilty, with their children and their house.

CHO. But see he comes, the unhappy youth, his
 flesh

And golden-tressed head, all rent. What grief 1435
 Hath its full measure here ? A double wo
 Sent by the gods hath seized this mournful house.

DIANA, THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, CHORUS.

HIP. O miserable me, how torn, how gash'd !
 The effect of that injurious doom pronounced
 By my injurious father. Wretched me ! 1440
 I perish : through my head convulsive pains

Shoot fierce ; my brain is rack'd.—A little pause ;—
 Soft, I would rest my harass'd limbs awhile.—
 O that detested chariot, and ye steeds,
 Fed by my hands, you have destroy'd me, kill'd me !—
 O, by the gods I beg you, gently touch 1446
 My mangled body : that rude hand, whose is it ?
 It hurts my side : support me gently ; lead,
 With smooth and even motion lead along
 A hapless wretch, and by a father's error 1450
 Accursed. O Jove, dost thou behold these things ?
 My modesty, my reverence for the gods
 Avail me not : the chastest of mankind,
 I lose my life, and in thy sight go down
 To the dark realms of death. My pious toils, 1455
 Benevolent to man, avail me not.
 Pain, pain now racks me : quit me, touch me not ;
 And let death come to give my miseries ease.
 You torture me. O, that I had a sword,
 Whose piercing point might let out life, and lay me
 At rest ! Alas, my father's dreadful curse, 1461
 And you, my blood-polluted ancestors !
 Your deeds of former times come forth, and all
 Their vengeance falls on me : but why on me ?
 I had no share in those ill deeds. Ah me ! 1465
 What can I say ? How shall I free my life
 From these severe, immedicable pains ?
 O, would the black necessity of death
 And night compose a tortured wretch to rest !
 DIA. Unhappy youth, in what calamity 1470
 Involved ? Thy generous mind hath ruin'd thee.
 HIP. Odors divine breathe round me : in my ills
 My sense is full of thee ; it gives my pain
 Some respite. Is Diana in the house ?
 DIA. Near thee, poor youth, thy honor'd goddess
 stands. 1475

HIP. Seest thou, O queen, what miseries are mine !

DIA. I see ; but from my eyes no tear must flow. '

HIP. Thy huntsman, thy attendant now no more.

DIA. No more, but perish'd by a cruel fate.

HIP. Thy statues and thy steeds no more my care.

DIA. The mischief-loving Venus plotted this. 1481

HIP. Ah me ! I feel her power : she hath undone me.

DIA. Her honor slighted by the chaste she deems.

HIP. She, cruel goddess, hath destroy'd us three.

DIA. Thyself, thy father, and his hapless wife. 1485

HIP. Therefore I mourn my father's wretchedness.

DIA. He by the guileful goddess was deceived.

HIP. Alas, my father, what a wo is thine !

THE. It sinks me : life, my son, is irksome to me.

HIP. More than myself thy error I deplore. 1490

THE. Would I might die instead of thee, my son !

HIP. How fatal are thy father Neptune's gifts !

THE. O, that the wish had never pass'd my lips !

HIP. If not, so great thy rage, thou wouldst have
kill'd me. 1494

THE. The gods had then deprived me of my sense.

HIP. Ah, what a curse on mortals from the gods !

DIA. Forbear : this violent and cruel rage

Of Venus, which hath crush'd thee for thy chaste

And honest resolution, shall not sink

In dark oblivion unrevenged ; it shall not : 1500

For of her minions, one, whom her heart holds

The dearest of mankind, shall feel the vengeance,

The inevitable vengeance of this bow.

To thee, unhappy sufferer, for these ills

High honors in Trœzene will I give : 1505

To thee the virgins, ere their nuptial hour,

Shall, for a length of ages, from their heads

Sever their tresses, and with tears bewail
 Thy fate ; to thee the melancholy song
 Their modest train shall raise ; nor shall the love 1510
 Of Phædra sink unmention'd and forgotten.
 Son of the aged Ægeus, in thine arms
 Take thou thy son ; embrace him ; for thy error
 Hath slain him, not thy will ; and mortal man
 Must err when so the gods appoint. And thou, 1515
 Hippolytus, forbear to hate thy father ;
 For thus to perish was thy fate. But now
 Farewell : to see the dying or the dead
 Is not permitted me, it would pollute
 Mine eyes ; and thou art near this fatal ill. 1520

HIP. And farewell thou : go, virgin, and be bless'd ;
 Nor grieve that our long converse here hath end.
 My anger 'gainst my father is disarm'd
 At thy command, for thou hast ever found me
 Obedient to thy dictates. O'er mine eyes 1525
 Darkness already comes : my father, take me,
 Take me, my father, and compose my limbs.

THE. Alas, my son, how wretched dost thou make
 me !

HIP. I die : the gates of Pluto open to me.

THE. And leaving me inexpiably guilty. 1530

HIP. Not so, since I acquit thee of my death.

THE. What ! dost thou free me from the charge of
 blood ?

HIP. Be witness, goddess of the unerring bow.

THE. O my loved son, how generous to thy father !

HIP. Thou too, farewell, my father ; be thou happy !

THE. How good, how pious is thy mind, my son !

HIP. Be it thy wish to obtain such true-born sons.

THE. Forsake me not, my son ; retain thy strength.

HIP. No longer I retain my strength : I die :
 But veil my face ; now veil it with my vests. 1540

THE. Ye realms of Pallas, ye illustrious towers
Of Athens, what your loss, of such a man
Deprived? O miserable me! How oft
My memory, Venus, will recall thy ills!

CHO. To all the citizens this common grief 1545
Came unexpected, and with many tears
Will be bewail'd: for of the great, reports,
That merit sorrow, strike the impression deep.

THE PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JOCASTA.

PHORBAS.

ANTIGONE.

POLYNICES.

ETEOCLES.

CREON.

TIRESIAS.

MENŒCEUS.

ŒDIPUS.

MESSENGERS.

CHORUS of Phœnician virgins.

THE PHŒNICIAN VIRGINS.

ARGUMENT.

AN agreement is effected between Eteocles and Polynices, the rival sons of Œdipus, to share the royalty of Thebes, and reign alternately, each a year. The throne is first occupied by Eteocles, by right of seniority ; but, after the expiration of the term, he violates the mutual arrangement by a retention of the sovereignty. Polynices implores the assistance of Adrastus, king of Argos, whose daughter he marries ; and, accompanied by his father-in-law, with five other renowned chieftains and a numerous army, arrives at the gates of Thebes, which city he prepares to capture by immediate assault. A conference is now held by the young men, through the mediation of their mother ; but the unyielding arrogance of Eteocles drives his younger brother to extremities. In the mean time, at the desire of the Theban monarch, the prophet Tiresias is consulted by Creon, who learns that victory, in the ensuing contest, can only be secured by the sacrifice of his son Menœceus. To avoid this painful alternative, Creon sends his son to Thesprotia ; but no sooner has Menœceus quitted his presence than he generously destroys himself, in order thereby to secure the safety of his country. A furious attack is now made on the city, which proves unsuccessful : the Argive leaders are slain, and the two brothers destroy each other in single combat ; while their mother, in despair, puts a period to her own existence. The government of Thebes now devolves on Creon, who forbids the rites of sepulture to be afforded to the dead body of Polynices, and banishes Œdipus, whose daughter Antigone piously resolves to accompany him in his exile, after paying the last duties to her brother, at the peril of her own life.

JOCASTA.

O THOU, that whirling 'midst the stars of heaven
 Thy radiant course, and on thy golden car
 High seated, glorying in thy fiery steeds,
 Rollest the orient light, resplendent Sun,
 How inauspicious didst thou dart thy beams 5
 That day on Thebes, when from the sea-wash'd coast
 Of fair Phœnicia Cadmus on this land
 Set his ill-omen'd foot! Yet to his arms
 The queen of love consign'd her beauteous daughter
 Harmonia; and from her, to crown his joys, 10
 Sprung Polydorus; Labdacus from him
 Derived his birth; the father he of Laius.
 Menœceus was my sire, and from one mother
 Creon my brother: me my father named
 Jocasta, and to Laius wedded me. 15
 Year after year roll'd on, our nuptial bed
 Yet childless, when to Phœbus he his way
 Inquiring took, and of the god requests
 The sweet society of a son to cheer
 His house: the oracle replied, 'O king 20
 Of warlike Thebes, sow not, the gods averse,
 For such a fatal harvest: should a son
 Spring up, that son shall kill thee, and thine house
 Shall sink in blood.' Yet one night in his wine
 He yielded to his pleasure, and a son 25
 From thence arose: but conscious of his fault
 Offending 'gainst the oracular voice, that son
 He to his herdsmen gave in charge to expose him
 In the rich meads of Juno, where Cithæron
 O'er shades the vale, and with sharp-pointed steel 30
 Bored through his legs; hence Greece gave him the
 name
 Of *Œdipus*. Him there the wandering grooms,

That watch'd the grazing steeds of Polybus,
 Took up, and to their royal mistress bore :
 She cherish'd at her breast the child, that cost me 35
 A mother's throes, and works upon her lord
 To deem it hers. When now the blooming down
 Spoke manhood in my son, by instinct moved
 Or some report, to Apollo's shrine he went
 Ardent to know his parents : at that time 40
 To the same shrine went Laius, to inquire,
 If haply he might learn, what fate attended
 His exposed child : at Phocis, where the road
 Divides itself, they met ; the charioteer
 Of Laius sternly bids him quit the way, 45
 Yielding to kings : he silent moved and slow,
 Greatly indignant ; but the rushing steeds
 Rent with their trampling hoofs his bleeding feet :
 At this, (but why relate each circumstance
 Of bloody action distant far ?) the son 50
 There kills the father, and to Polybus
 In triumph sends the chariot. Now the sphinx
 Prey'd with a vulture's talons on the city.
 My husband now no more, my brother Creon
 Proclaim'd to him, whose deep thought should unfold
 The subtle monster's intricate enigma, 55
 My bed the prize : chance then brought Œdipus,
 My son ; the sphinx's riddle he explain'd ;
 And, as the monarch of this land, assumes
 The sceptre, his just meed, and marries me 60
 His mother, hapless he, and knew it not ;
 Nor did she know that her son shared her bed.
 I to my child bore children ; two brave sons,
 Eteocles, and the illustrious worth
 Of Polynices ; and two daughters, one 65
 Her father call'd Ismene, but the elder
 I named Antigone. But when he knew,

Much-suffering *Œdipus*, that sharing mine
 He shared his mother's bed, in grief, in rage,
 He did a deed of desperate horror, rent 70
 His eyes, and with his golden buckles bored
 Their bleeding orbs. When now the manly down
 Began to darken on their cheeks, his sons
 In secret shut him, from the eyes of men
 Immured, that the sad memory of his fortune, 75
 Which needed much the best plann'd policy,
 Might wear away: yet in the house he lives,
 With most unhallow'd execrations cursing
 His sons, that with the sword's sharp edge his house
 Their mutual hate may share. They, fearing this, 80
 Fearing the gods might execute this curse,
 Should they reside beneath one roof, agreed
 In friendly compact, that my *Polynices*,
 The younger, should a willing exile go
 Leaving this land, and to *Eteocles* 85
 Consign the throne, till the revolving year
 With grateful interchange should call him back.
 The imperial seat he quits not, but with scorn
 Drives *Polynices* out to banishment,
 Who flies to *Argos*, and accepting there 90
 The alliance of *Adrastus*, drew to arms
 A host of *Argives*, who with many a shield
 Form the firm phalanx round their chief, and march
 To the seven gates of *Thebes*: before these walls
 His father's sceptre he demands, his share 95
 Of empire. To prevent this dreadful contest,
 I wrought my son, ere his hand grasp the spear,
 Confiding in a truce to enter *Thebes*,
 Brother with brother holding conference :
 Gentle his answer ; soon he will be here. 100
 O thou, that in the shining clouds of heaven
Dwellest enthroned, all-powerful *Jove*, preserve us,

Dispose my sons to peace : well it becomes
 Thy wisdom, nor on one devoted head
 To pour the unceasing storm of wretchedness! 105

PHORBAS, ANTIGONE.

PHOR. Pride of thy father's house, sweet-breathing
 flower,
 Since, with leave granted, thou hast left the apartments,
 Where virgin modesty retires to shun
 The gaze of men, and to this tower approachest,
 Anxious to view the Argive troops beneath, 110
 Yet stay thy steps, Antigone ; mine eye
 Shall first explore the pass ; haply some Theban
 May be in sight, and with opprobrious taunts
 Revile me as a slave, nor spare ev'n thee
 Of royal birth : this caution had, my tongue 115
 Shall tell thee all, whate'er I saw or heard
 From the Argives, to thy brother when I bore
 The offer of a truce, and thence return'd.
 But nigh this house no Theban is in sight ;
 Come then, ascend this height ; let thy foot tread 120
 These stairs of ancient cedar ; thence survey
 The plains beneath : see, what a host of foes
 At Dirce's fount encamp, and stretch along
 The valley where Ismenus rolls his stream.

ANT. Stretch forth thy hand, thy aged hand : sup-
 port 125
 My youth, assist me whilst I mount this height.

PHOR. Lean on my hand : in lucky hour thou
 comest :

In motion is the wide Pelasgian host,
 Each wheeling phalanx forming round its chief.

ANT. Awful Diana, virgin goddess, see 130
 The field all brass glares like the lightning's blaze.

PHOR. Not tamely Polynices to this land

Returns, but raging leads a numerous host,
Horsemen, and deepening ranks of foot in arms.

ANT. Are the gates closed, fasten'd with bars of
brass 135

To the strong bulwarks by Amphion raised
Of rock impregnable?

PHOR. Be confident ;
Within the city is secure : but view
That chief, if thy desire to know excite thee.

ANT. Who is that chief, o'er whose bright helmet
waves 140

The snowy plume, as marshalling the van
He moves, and on his arm his brazen shield
Lifts lightly? Whence his race, and what his name?

PHOR. That warrior chief from rich Mycenæ boasts
His race, and near the fount of Lerna fix'd 145
His royal seat, the king Hippomedon.

ANT. With what a haughty port he moves, to sight
How dreadful, towering like an earth-born giant !
Blazing amidst his starry arms, he seems
Far other than the race of mortal men. 150

PHOR. Seest thou that chief now passing o'er the
stream
Of Dirce?

ANT. Different he, of different guise
His arms. Who is the warrior?

PHOR. Tydeus he,
The son of Œneus : in his breast he bears
The Ætolian Mars.

ANT. Is this the prince who made 155
The sister of my brother's royal bride
His nuptial choice? How different are his arms,
And of barbaric mixture !

PHOR. Fierce in fight -
The Ætolian warriors lift the long square targe,

And hurl with certain aim the flying lance. 100

ANT. Say, whence this perfect knowledge?

PHOR. To yon camp,

Sent with the offer of a truce, I mark'd

The impress of each shield; these now I see,

And by them recognise each martial chief.

ANT. What leader he, that marches by the tomb
Of Zethus? O'er his eyes of gorgon glare 160

His locks hang clustering: ah, what numbers, clad
In complete arms, attend the dreadful youth!

PHOR. Parthenopæus this, the illustrious son
Of Atalanta.

ANT. May Diana's shafts, 170

Who o'er the mountains with his mother leads

The chase, extend him breathless on the plain,

That comes in arms to lay my country waste!

PHOR. Be thy vows heard: but Justice leads their
march;

And much I fear the gods with righteous eyes 175

Regard their cause.

ANT. But where, ah, where is he,

Whom with a rugged fate one mother bore

With me? where is my Polynices, tell me?

PHOR. He near the tomb, where Niobe interr'd
Her seven slain virgin daughters, stands in arms 180

Associate with Adrastus. Dost thou see him?

ANT. I see him, yes, but indistinctly; see

Distant what wears the semblance of his form.

O could I, like a nimble-moving cloud,

Fly through the air, borne on the winged winds, 185

Fly to my brother, I would throw my arms

Round his dear neck, unhappy youth, so long

An exile. Mark him, good old man, O mark

How graceful in his golden arms he stands,

And glitters like the bright sun's orient rays. 190

PHOR. The truce will bring him hither ; in this house

His presence soon will fill thy soul with joy.

ANT. But what is he, high-seated in his car,
Ruling his milk-white coursers : whence the chief?

PHOR. Amphiaraus, who foretells the fates, 195
As bleeding on the earth the victims lie.

ANT. O daughter of the glittering-cinctured Sun,
Thou golden-circled light, fair Moon, how calm,
With what a sober dignity he guides
His steeds ! But where is he, whose dreadful threats
Insult the city, the proud Capaneus ? 201

PHOR. Rolling his eager eye to each access
Of the seven gates, see how he scans the walls ;
From their foundation to the battlements
Nothing their height.

ANT. O, ye deep roaring thunders 205
Of Jove, ye livid lightnings' blasting flames,
Vengeance, 'tis thine to quell his arrogance !
Shall he to proud Mycenæ, and the fount
Of Lerna gushing from the trident's stroke,
To Amymonë's banks, Neptunian stream, 210
In slavery lead the unhappy dames of Thebes
The captives of his spear ? Never, ah ! never,
Daughter of Jove, revered Diana, thou
That braid'st with gold thy tresses, may I live
To suffer slavery !

PHOR. Go, my child, retire 215
To thy apartments, there remain ; thine eyes
Have been indulged with what they wish'd to see :
For, as the storm of war rolls near the town,
A troop of females to this royal house
Advances ; and that sex hath nature form'd 220
Prone to complain ; if once they take the occasion,
Small though it be, to give their words a vent,
Another and another still is added ;

And 'tis their pleasure 'mongst themselves to speak
 Nothing that owns the power of moderation. 225

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Bounding o'er the Tyrian flood
 From Phœnicia's sea-girt isle,
 Hallow'd to the Delphic god,
 I come, the first-fruits of the spoil;
 Destined to dwell, attendant at his shrine, 230
 Where, cover'd with eternal snow,
 Parnassus lifts his forked brow:
 Our oars brush'd lightly o'er the Ionian brine,
 Along Cilicia's wave-wash'd strand,
 A wide, wild waste of barren sand; 235
 Whilst the mild Zephyr through the liquid skies
 Whispers pleasure as he flies.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Cull'd from Tyre, its brightest grace,
 Worthy of the god, I came
 To Agenor's high-born race, 240
 Glorifying, Cadmus, in thy name,
 To kindred towers where sceptred Laius reign'd;
 Nor will the god more precious hold
 The sculptured forms that breathe in gold.
 Yet thus far have these walls my zeal detain'd; 245
 As yet Castalia's silver wave
 These flowing tresses waits to lave,
 Delicious stream, where bathes the virgin train,
 Serving at Apollo's fane.

EPODE.

Thou rock, irradiate with the sacred flame, 250
 That, blazing on thy awful brow
 Seems double to the vale below!
 252 The fire was on that head of Parnassus which was

Thou kindred cliff, on whose rude height
 To Bacchus swells the towering shrine;
 Whose crags among, a wondrous sight, 255
 Glows the daily-ripening vine,
 And fills the goblet with its nectar'd stream!
 Ye caves, beneath whose horrid shade
 His bulk the Delphic dragon laid!
 Ye mountain watch-towers of the gods, 260
 Whose steep, with snows eternal crown'd,
 The virgin train encompass round;
 O, take me to your bless'd abodes;
 And far from Dirce's troubled waves
 Protect me, Phœbus, in thy hallow'd caves! 265

STROPHE II.

Now the impetuous god of war
 Shakes these walls with loud alarms;
 And his squadrons leading near,
 Fires their blood, and shouts to arms;
 Ah, be their fury 'gainst these bulwarks vain! 270
 For, touch'd with pity's social glow,
 Friend shares with friend the common wo;
 And sad Phœnicia, should misfortune's train
 Around these seven-tower'd rampires spread,
 Would bow with friendly grief her head; 275
 From Io boasting each their high descent,
 I the woes of each lament.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Now the thundering storm of war
 Rolls along these groaning fields;
 Now with fierce terrific glare 280
 Blaze around the fiery shields,

sacred to Apollo and Diana; to those below it appeared double, being divided to the eye by a pointed rock which rose before it.

259 The Python.

Portending carnage red with gushing gore :
 And Mars, in all his ruthless pride,
 With rage and horror at his side,
 Bids on this royal house the ruin roar. 285
 Pelasgian Argos, how I fear
 The fury of thy vengeful spear!
 For the brave youth the sword of justice draws
 And the gods assert his cause.

POLYNICES, CHORUS.

POL. These guarded gates turn'd on their easy
 hinges 290
 To admit my entrance ; caught within the net,
 Not without blood, I fear, to yield me passage
 Returning : each way therefore let me roll
 My cautious eye, lest treachery steal upon me. 294
 But with this good sword arm'd, my hand shall
 work
 My safety with brave daring.—Ha ! Who's this ?—
 What ! does a noise appal me ?—To the adventurous
 All things cause terror, when on hostile ground
 He sets his foot. Confiding in my mother,
 And scarce confiding, hither am I come 300
 Beneath the sanction of a truce. But see
 Protection nigh, the blazing altars here,
 And houses not forsaken : come, my sword,
 Rest in thy sheath ; and let me question these,
 Whoe'er they are, that stand before the palace. 305
 Ye female strangers, tell me, from what country
 Advance you to the houses of our Greece ?
 CHO. Phœnicia is my country, gave me birth,
 And nurtured me, till, captive by the spear,
 Selected from the virgin train, the sons 310
 Of Cadmus led me hither, to Apollo
 A hallow'd offering. Whilst the illustrious house

Of Œdipus prepared that I attend
 The awful shrine and altars of the god,
 The embattled Argives march'd against the city. 315
 Now tell me who thou art, that thou hast enter'd
 The seven-tower'd rampires of the Theban land.

POL. My sire is Œdipus, the son of Laius :
 Jocasta, daughter of Menœceus, bore me ;
 Thebes knows me by the name of Polynices. 320

CHOR. O thou, whose high blood to Agenor's sons
 (My lords that led me hither) is allied,
 Thus lowly at my knees, O king, I fall,
 Holding my country's custom. Art thou come,
 After this length of absence, art thou come 325
 To thy paternal land ?—What, ho ! come forth,
 Thou venerable dame, open thy doors :
 I call thee to thy son : dost thou not hear ?
 Why this delay to quit thy lofty mansion ?
 Haste, come, and in thy fond arms clasp thy son. 330

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

Joc. Hearing, ye virgins, your Phœnician voice
 Within the house, I hither drag my steps
 Feeble with trembling age.—My son, my son,
 After this length of time, this tedious absence,
 Do I behold thy face ? Ah ! fold thine arms 335
 Around me, clasp me to thy bosom, lean
 Thy cheek 'gainst my fond cheek, and shade my
 breast

With the dark ringlets of thy clustering hair.
 Can I believe I hold thee in my arms
 Unlook'd for thus, so much beyond my hopes ? 340
 What shall I say to thee ? How tell thee all ?
 To touch thee thus, to hear thy voice, is joy,
 Is transport ; and my throbbing heart once more
Feels its old raptures. O my son, my son,

Long hast thou left thy father's house forsaken, 345
Forced into exile by thy brother's fault.
How have thy friends, and how hath Thebes wish'd
for thee !

With many a mournful cry my hoary locks
For thee I clipp'd away, for thee threw off
My splendid robes, and changed them for these
weeds, 350

This sable dress of grief. Within the house,
His eyes extinct, the poor old man still mourns,
With many a tear, with many an ardent wish,
The discord of the brothers ; and his grief,
Swelling to madness, arm'd his hand to strike 355

At his own life ; bewailing his rash curses
Utter'd against his sons, with sighs and groans,
In solitary darkness lies conceal'd.
For thee, my son, the nuptial bed, I hear,
Raised in a foreign house, gives thee the joys 360

Of love, and fondly to a foreign stem
Allies thee : to a mother grievous this,
Grievous to high-born Laius, this disgrace
To be allied to strangers ; nor did I
Light, as our country's rites require, the torch 365

To attend thy nuptials, office well beseeeming
A happy mother : his unconscious stream
Ismenus roll'd, and his delicious wave
Fill'd not the bridal bath ; through silent Thebes
No voice of joy hail'd, as she pass'd along, 370

Thy entering bride. Be these ill omens vain !
Whether the sword, or discord, or thy father
Be the sad cause, or Ate in the house
Of Œdipus her horrid orgies holds ;

On me, with all their weight, these sorrows fall. 375

CHO. Strong are the pangs of child-birth, yet each
mother

Glow with a warm affection to her children.

POL. With confidence, though mix'd with some distrust,

I set my foot amongst my foes ; such love
Our country claims perforce : whoe'er suggests **380**

A different argument, may please himself
With empty words, but his sad heart is there.

Yet so far troubled thoughts arose, and fear
Lest treachery from my brother should attempt
My life, that as I pass'd I grasp'd my sword, **385**

And each way roll'd mine eye ; yet did the truce
Assure me, and thy faith, which hath induced me
To enter thus this fortress of my fathers.

The tears gush forth, as, after this long absence,
I view these roofs, the altars of the gods, **390**

The circus, where my active youth first learn'd
Its martial exercise, and Dirce's stream :

From these unjustly exiled I seek refuge
'Midst strangers in a foreign state, whilst tears
Incessant dew my cheeks. But to my griefs **395**

This grief is added, thus to see thy head
Shorn of its honor'd locks, these sable weeds,
The garb of mourning. Ah, my miseries !

When discord rages in the house of friends,
How dreadful, how implacable the strife ! **400**

But of my father tell me, whose sad age
Sits darkling in the house ; of my two sisters
Tell me : unhappy, mourn they yet my exile ?

Joc. Some vengeful god pours ruin on the race
Of *Cædipus*, e'er since thy luckless birth, **405**

And my unholy nuptials with thy father,
Who gave thee being. But of this no more :

Whate'er the gods ordain, 'tis ours to bear.
Much would I ask ; but how ? I fear to offend
The feelings of thy mind ; for thou art come, **410**

Indulging my fond wish.

POL. Without reserve
Be thy inquiries ; for to me thy will
Is ever dear.

JOC. This first then would I know ;
Is exile from our country a great ill ?

POL. The greatest : more indeed than words can
speak. 416

JOC. Whence this ? what gives such harshness to the
ill ?

POL. The greatest this, it curbs the ingenuous tongue.

JOC. Who dares not speak his free thoughts is a
slave.

POL. The follies of the powerful must be borne.

JOC. To be unwise with the unwise is painful. 420

POL. To interest he must bend, and be a slave.

JOC. But Hope, they say, supports the exile's soul.

POL. Her looks are gracious, but her steps are slow.

JOC. Hath time discover'd that her smiles are false ?

POL. The sweetest, most attracting charms are in
them. 425

JOC. Whence, ere obtain'd by marriage, hadst thou
food ?

POL. One day had its supplies, another not.

JOC. Thy father's friends, were they not courteous
to thee ?

POL. In prosperous days friends swarm, in adverse
vanish. 429

JOC. Did not thy noble birth to greatness raise
thee ?

POL. To want is wretched ; high birth fed me not.

JOC. Our country then must be most dear to us.

POL. I have not power of words to say how dear.

JOC. But what to Argos led thee ? what thy view ?

POL. The oracle of Phœbus warn'd Adrastus— 435

Joc. What wouldst thou say? Tell me, I have not heard it.

Pol. To wed his daughters to a boar and lion.

Joc. What semblance hadst thou of these savages?

Pol. I know not; by the gods call'd to this fortune.

Joc. The god is wise. But how obtain these nuptials? 440

Pol. 'Twas night; I reach'd the portal of Adrastus.

Joc. In search of lodging, as a wandering exile?

Pol. Ev'n so; and then another exile came.

Joc. Another! who? And was he wretched too?

Pol. Tydeus, whom fame reports the son of (Æneus.

Joc. In what to boar or lion were ye liko? 446

Pol. In contest fierce as theirs for space to lodge.

Joc. And did Adrastus think the oracle

In this accomplish'd?

Pol. And in marriage gave us

His daughters, blooming in the charms of youth. 450

Joc. Art thou then happy in the nuptial state?

Pol. I never, to this day, had cause to blame it.

Joc. How hast thou wrought with all these troops
in arms

447 Statius relates this adventure with his usual spirit. Polynices, wandering in a dark and tempestuous night, at length beheld the lights gleaming from Larissa, the citadel of Argos: he hastens thither, and, entering the vestibule of the palace, throws himself on the floor to repose his limbs, stiff with the rain and wind. It happened that Tydeus (then an exile from Calydon for the unhappy murder of his brother) was driven by the same storm to the same place for shelter: a quarrel immediately ensued between the two princes; they fought; till Adrastus, disturbed by their clamors, came forth with many torches, and put an end to the fray: he hospitably received them into his house, where, observing that Polynices wore on his shoulders a lion's hide, as Tydeus was covered with the skin of the Calydonian bore, he concluded that the oracle was accomplished in their arrival.

To attend thee hither?

POL. To each son his faith
 Adrastus pledged, to Tydeus and to me, 455
 (My bridal day was his,) and with an oath
 Confirm'd it, to replace us in our country,
 Me first: hence many chiefs unite in arms
 From Argos and Mycenæ, rendering me
 A needful but a melancholy service. 460

That to these walls I lead my warring troops,
 I call the gods to witness, how reluctant
 I lift my spear against my much-loved parents.
 But now with thee it rests to end these ills,
 To close again the broken links of love 465
 'Twixt jarring brothers, to my toils give rest,
 To thine, and to thy country's. Oft of old
 Hath this been said, let me repeat the same;—
 'Rich havings win respect, and bring to men
 The greatest power:' and therefore am I come 470
 With many a ported spear: the noblest blood,
 If chill'd with want, boasts its high fount in vain.

CNO. So, to the mediation of this peace
 Eteocles comes: be it thy care, Jocasta,
 (Well it becomes a mother,) to speak words, 475
 Whose soothing charms may reconcile thy sons.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ETE. Well, mother, I am here, this grace to thee
 Conceding. What is to be done? Some one
 Begin the conference: for the walls around,
 My squadrons marshall'd and well harness'd cars, 480
 I check them, till from thee I learn the terms
 Of amity, for which thou hast received him
 Within these walls, with leave from me obtain'd.

JOC. Restrain thy heat: the hasty spirit errs
 From justice: slow-form'd counsels perfect wisdom.

Repress that fiery eye, and those fierce thoughts : 486
 'Tis not the Gorgon's head thou here beholdest ;
 It is thy brother that revisits us :
 And thou, my Polynices, turn thy face,
 Look on thy brother ; better wilt thou speak, 490
 Eye fix'd on eye, and better he receive
 Thy words. O, that my voice might counsel you
 To gentler reason ! When a friend, incensed
 Against a friend, met face to face, holds parle,
 The end, for which they meet, should be regarded 495
 Solely, no mention made of grievance past.
 My Polynices, be thy words first heard ;
 For thou art come, leading the troops of Argos,
 For injuries done thee : such thy plea : betwixt you
 Some god be umpire, and accord your strife. 500

POL. The words of truth are simple ; justice needs
 not

The circling train of wily argument,
 Clear in its proofs. Injustice, in itself
 Unsound, requires this medicinal trick
 Of glozing sophistry. For me, my care 505
 To save the honor of my father's house,
 My own, and his, my wish to avert the curse
 Which Œdipus denounced against his sons,
 Led me to leave this land, a willing exile,
 And give him for one rolling year to rule 510
 His country, then return to take my share
 Of regal power ; not with discordant hate
 And slaughter to achieve outrageous deeds,
 Or suffer them, though this hath been my fate.
 He gave assent, and with a sacred oath 515
 Call'd the just gods to witness : yet his faith
 In nothing kept, but holds perforce the power,
 And my part of this regal seat. Yet I,
Receiving my just right, am not averse

To send these powers away, in mine own house 520
 To hold my state the stipulated time,
 Then peaceful yield it to his rule again.
 I have no wish to desolate my country,
 Nor fix the firm machines to mount these walls.
 My right refused, with arms will I assert 525
 My cause, and to the gods make my appeal.
 My faith hath been held sacred, but to me
 Foul wrong is done, and by unrighteous force
 Am I driven forth an exile from my country.
 This is my plea, without collected proof 530
 Of circumstance, but just and clear to all,
 Wise or unwise : so seems it to my thoughts.

CHO. And to my thought, though not in Greece
 were form'd

Our infant minds, thou seem'st to speak with prudence.

ERE. Of honor and of wisdom if alike 535

All judg'd, nor contest nor debate would rise
 'Mongst men ; but 'tis not so : the names they use
 In common ; but each gives his sense to them.
 My sense of them I freely shall avow.

For Honor I would mount above the stars, 540

Above the sun's high course, or sink beneath
 Earth's deepest centre, might I so obtain

This idol of my soul, this worshipp'd power

Of royalty ; and never to another

Would I resign her, but myself enjoy 545

The splendid dignity : to give up greatness,

For low rank ill exchanged, were base indeed ;

And shame forbids, that he, who comes in arms,

Spreading o'er these rich realms the waste of war,

Should his rude will enjoy ; and Thebes would blush

At my dishonor, should I shrink through dread 551

Of the Argive spear, and to his hand resign

My sceptre. Seeks he to be reconciled?

This arms effect not: friendly speech does all
 The hostile sword could do. On other terms 555
 Would he inhabit here? it is allow'd him :
 This grace, though much unwilling, shall I grant.
 A kingdom in my grasp, shall I submit
 To live his vassal? No: come fire, come sword,
 Yoke thy proud steeds, fill all the fields with chariots,
 Thou never shalt extort my kingdom from me. 561
 If wrong must be, when empire is the prize,
 The noble cause gives glory to the wrong:
 In all besides let Justice hold her course.

CHO. This boast of glory ill becomes the tongue,
 Save where the deeds are glorious; else it holds 566
 Nothing of honor, but offends 'gainst justice.

JOC. Think not, Eteocles, my son, that Age
 Inherits naught but ills: Experience waits it,
 To wisdom train'd beyond the reach of youth. 570
 Why dost thou court that baneful pest, Ambition?
 Do not, my son: her power is built on wrong.
 Where'er the demon sets her foot, that house,
 That state sees all its high-raised glories vanish,
 And Desolation enters: yet on her 575
 Art thou enamor'd. Juster honors wait
 On Moderation: she links friend to friend,
 And state to state in firm society:
 For on the mind of man her equal laws
 Hath Nature stamp'd; but wild Ambition's flight 580
 Each rank below opposes, and at once
 Begins the war. Her equal laws first fix'd
 Equality of measure, poised the scale,
 And taught the nice array of marshall'd numbers.
 The dark-brow'd night, the radiance of the sun, 585
 In fair succession walk their annual round,
 Unenvious each of the other's reign: hence night
 And the sun's ray are useful to mankind.

But thou wilt brook no equal, nor to him
Allow his share of rule : where then is justice ? 500
Why with unbounded heat dost thou pursue
This flourishing injustice, royalty ?
What are its honors which thou prizest thus ?
To be conspicuous ? That's an empty glory.
Or wouldst thou labor much, whilst thy rich house 505
Possesses much ? And what is this abundance ?
'Tis nothing but a name : the temperate mind,
Its wants supplied, checks each desire of more ;
And mortal man enjoys not as his own
His treasured stores, but holds them as the gift 600
Of the high gods, who at their will resume them.
Wealth then hath no stability, but fleets
With each loose hour. Yet farther let me ask,
Is it thy wish to reign, or save thy country ?
Say'st thou, to reign ? Should he be conqueror, 605
Should thy troops fall beneath the spear of Argos,
Then shall thine eyes behold this city vanquish'd,
Then shall thine eyes behold its captive virgins
Dragg'd by the rude hands of the insulting foes.
So shall this love of empire, which inflames thee, 610
Be ruinous to the Thebans : yet thou art
Ambitious of its honors. This to thee.
Now, Polynices, be to thee my words.
Unwisely hath Adrastus to thy will
Indulged this grace ; and foolishly hast thou 615
Advanced in arms to desolate thy country.
Shouldst thou subdue this land, (may no such ill
Await it !) by the gods, how wilt thou raise
The trophies of thy spear ? How consecrate
The hallow'd victim for thy country vanquish'd ? 620
Or wilt thou on the banks of Inachus
Engrave upon the spoils, ' Thebes laid in ashes,
The victor Polynices to the gods

Fix'd here these shields?' Ah, never may that glory,
 Won by the arms of Greece, be thine, my son! 625
 Shouldst thou be conquer'd, should his arms prevail,
 How wilt thou, leaving thousands of her sons
 Here slain, revisit Argos? Every tongue
 Will clamor, 'In ill hour this fatal love
 Didst thou allow, Adrastus; for one bride, 630
 And her unhappy nuptials, on our heads
 Hath ruin fallen.' With eager speed, my son,
 Thou runn'st on double ill, to be bereaved
 Of these thy friends, and fail in this attempt.
 Check then, my sons, O, check your wild ambition;
 Both are imprudent, and, conflicting thus, 636
 Bring on the greatest and most hateful ills.

CHOR. Avert these ills, ye gods, and give the sons
 Of *Cedipus* to attune their souls to love!

ETR. This contest words decide not, but the 'time
 Is wasted fruitlessly: thy earnestness 641
 Avails not: there can be no thought of concord,
 But on the terms proposed, that I retain
 This sceptre, and alone reign monarch here:
 Then give me way; forbear thy tedious precepts. 645
 For thee, hence from these walls, or thou shalt die.

POL. By whom? Who is there so impenetrable,
 That dares 'gainst me lift his ensanguined sword,
 And shall not see his warm blood smoke on mine?

ETR. Thou'rt near him, in his presence: dost thou
 see 650
 These hands?

POL. I see them; but effeminate wealth
 Is base, and spiritless, and fond of life.

ETR. Comest thou with numbers then against a man
 Of no essay in arms?

POL. Discretion's guard
 Becomes a chief better than daring fierceness. 655

ETE. Thy insolence presumes upon the truce ;
That saves thy life.

POL. Yet once more I demand
The sceptre, and my just share of the kingdom.

ETE. Fruitless are thy demands : in mine own house
I will be lord.

POL. And hold more than thy portion ? 660

ETE. Thou hast my answer : hence then, quit the
town.

POL. Ye hallow'd altars of our guardian gods,—

ETE. Which thou art come to trample in the dust.

POL. Hear me.

ETE. What god can hear thee thus in arms
To desolate thy country ?

POL. And ye shrines 665
Of the twin gods mounted on milk-white steeds,—

ETE. Who hate thee.

POL. From my country I am driven ;—

ETE. For thou art come to waste it.

POL. Driven, ye gods,
By thy injustice.

ETE. At Mycenæ call
The gods, but not at Thebes.

POL. Unrighteous art thou. 670

ETE. But not, like thee, an enemy to my coun-
try.

POL. Thou drivest me hence despoil'd.

ETE. Nay more, this hand
Shall kill thee.

POL. O my father, dost thou hear
The wrongs I suffer ?

ETE. And the wrongs thou dost
He hears.

POL. And thou, my mother ?

ETE. 'Tis in thee 675

Impiety to name her.

POL. O my country!

ETE. To Argos go, there call on Lerna's stream.

POL. I go; disquiet not thyself. To thee,
My mother, let me pay my thanks.

ETE. Begone,

Hence, from this country.

POL. Hence I go: but first 680

Give me to see my father.

ETE. Thou obtain'st not

That grace.

POL. My virgin sisters then.

ETE. Nor these

Shalt thou e'er see again.

POL. Ah, my poor sisters!

ETE. Why namest thou them? Thou art their
greatest foe.

POL. But thou, my mother, fare thou well.

JOC. To me 685

What can be well, my son?

POL. I am thy son

No more.

JOC. To many miseries was I born.

POL. For he heaps wrongs upon us.

ETE. No; to me

The wrong is done.

POL. Where wilt thou take thy station

Before the towers?

ETE. And why that question?

POL. There 690

Will I oppose thee front to front; there kill thee.

ETE. My soul's on fire to meet thee.

JOC. Wretched me!

What will you do, my sons?

ETE. That will be seen.

Joc. Will you not fly the furies of your father?

POL. On his whole house fall ruin !

ETE. **Soon this sword. 695**

No more inactive, shall be stain'd with blood.

POL. Thou earth that nurturedst me, and you, ye
gods,

I call to witness, that dishonor'd, wrong'd,
Calamitous, I hence by force am driven,
Spurn'd as a slave, an alien to the blood

Of Œdipus. Should aught of ill hence fall

On thee, my country, charge the fault on him,

Not me: reluctant am I come, reluctant

Was I driven hence. And thou, imperial Phœ-
bus,

**Presiding o'er these streets, farewell: ye mansions,
That hold the loved companions of my youth. 706**

Ye hallow'd statues of the gods, farewell ;

For that again it may be mine to address you

I cannot warrant: yet hope slumbers not,

Nor my firm trust, that, with the gods, this hand 710

Shall kill him, and secure my reign o'er Thebes.

ERE. Away, begone: well did thy father give thee .

A name portending contest and much strife.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

**When Cadmus from the Tyrian strand
Arriving trod this destined land, 715**

Heaven-taught the heifer led his way,

Till down to willing rest she lay,

Marking his future seat ;

By fate assign'd the furrow'd plain,

Thick-waving with the golden grain ; 720

EPODE.

Thee, whom to the thundering Jove of yore
 On Nile's moist margent Io bore, 755
 Io, from whom this mighty race
 Their heaven-descended lineage trace,
 Thee, Epaphus, I call: my prayer
 Barbaric though my voice, O hear!
 Barbaric though my prayer, attend; 760
 This race, thy progeny, defend!
 Come, O come, and with thee join
 The double-named Proserpine,
 And bounteous Ceres, smiling queen,
 That holds o'er all her golden reign; 765
 For all things take from her their birth,
 Nurtured by the fertile earth:
 Bring these deities, whose sway
 The copious-rising fruits obey,
 This land to guard, once their abode: 770
 All things are easy to a god.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

ERE. Go thou, with thy best speed bring Creon
 hither,
 The brother of Jocasta; bear from me
 This message; on affairs of high importance,
 Our house respecting, and my country's weal, 775
 I would hold counsel with him, ere we move
 Embattled, and address the spear to fight.—
 His presence spares thy trouble; towards my house
 With voluntary step I see him coming.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

CRE. Each various station have I visited, 780
 Wishing to see thee, all the gates around,
 And guards, if haply I might find the king.

ETE. Thee, Creon, have I wish'd to see ; for vain
The imperfect treaty, when on terms of peace
With Polynices I held conference. 785

CRE. Proud of his new alliance with Adrastus,
And on his force presuming, he aspires
Higher than Thebes can brook ; but on the gods
Behoves us to repose that care : what most 789
May check his proud attempt, I come to warn thee.

ETE. What may that be ? I comprehend thee not.

CRE. Fled from yon hostile camp an Argive comes.

ETE. What now their purpose ? Brings he aught of
new ?

CRE. Soon at each tower of Thebes yon Argive host
Will circle the beleaguer'd town in arms. 795

ETE. Without the walls then must our arms ad-
vance,—

CRE. What, does the fire of youth disturb thy sense?

ETE. And soon before these ramparts join the fight.

CRE. Few are the troops of Thebes, their numbers
great.

ETE. I know them, champions bold in puissant
words. 800

CRE. Argos bears some renown in Greece for arms.

ETE. Soon with their carnage will I fill yon plain.

CRE. A work of no small toil, though much I wish it.

ETE. I will not coop my forces in the walls. 804

CRE. Conquest on prudent counsels always waits.

ETE. What different measures wilt thou I attempt?

CRE. All, ere that extreme hazard put to proof.

ETE. Should our close arms attack them in the night?

CRE. Failing in that, canst thou retreat secure ?

ETE. The night, alike to all, befriends the bold. 810

CRE. Danger in night's dark shades strikes deeper
terror.

ETE. Should I rush on them whilst they take repast?

CRE. That might alarm ; but victory is our aim.

ETE. Near rolls the stream of Dirce, deep to pass.

CRE. Behoves us best a firm and armed guard. 815

ETE. Or should I lead my horse, and charge their troops ?

CRE. With rolling cars their files are fenced around.

ETE. What shall I do then ? Tamely yield the town ?

CRE. No ; but deliberate well, if thou art wise. 819

ETE. Say, what more prudent plan can be devised ?

CRE. Seven from among them, so it is reported,—

ETE. And what their mighty charge ? The force is small.

CRE. To lead their troops assaulting our seven gates.

ETE. What should we do ? I brook not this suspense.

CRE. Choose thou seven chiefs to oppose them at the gates. 825

ETE. Heading their bands ? or each with single spear ?

CRE. Heading their bands : and see thou choose the bravest.

ETE. To guard the towers, I ween, from all access.

CRE. Add other leaders : one man sees not all things. 829

ETE. For boldness chosen, or deliberate thought ?

CRE. For both : small merit singly each can boast.

ETE. It shall be so : to the seven towers with speed

I go, and at each gate, as thou hast said,

Appoint the chiefs, opposing man to man.

To name them would delay me, whilst the foes 835

Ev'n to the walls advance. Haste calls me hence,

To rouse our arms to action. In the fight

Let me but meet my brother, front to front

Opposed, my spear shall reach him, strike him dead,

That hither came to desolate my country. 840

The marriage of Antigone, my sister,
 And thy son Hæmon, should the adverse fates
 Frustrate my expectation, be thy care :
 Affied before, their spousals, ere I go,
 I now confirm. Thou art my mother's brother ; 845
 What need of words ? let her have worthy treatment,
 Such as becomes my honor, and thy own.
 My father hath the meed his rashness earn'd,
 From light self-exiled : much I praise him not :
 Ev'n now with words of fiercest execration 850
 He calls down ruin on us. Yet one thing
 Remains : if aught of oracle the seer
 Tiresias hath to speak, inquire it of him :
 Thy son Meneceus, from his grandsire named,
 Shall lead the prophet hither ; to thy ear 855
 He willingly will speak, with me offended,
 For that I censured his divining art.
 One thing I charge thee, Creon, charge the state ;
 Should victory grace my arms, let not the corse
 Of Polynices in this Theban earth 860
 Find sepulture : if any, though of those
 We hold most dear, entombs it, let him die.
 This, Creon, to thy charge. You, my attendants,
 Bring forth my arms, the mailed dress of war,
 That to the appointed contest of the spear 865
 I may rush forth, aspiring to revenge
 And conquest. Thou, calm courage, be our guide ;
 High-valued goddess, save, O, save my country !

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Wo-working Mars, relentless power,
 In blood and death why this severe delight, 870
 Untuned to Bacchus and the festive hour ?
 Why, 'midst the measures, on some bridal night,

The rosy-crowned nymphs among,
 Dost thou not spread thy lightly-waving hair,
 And, temper'd to the flute's mellifluous air, 875
 Enchant the Graces with a jocund song?
 Thy joy, to wild and fierce alarms,
 Amidst the horrid clash of arms,
 Lured with the scent of blood, yon host to lead,
 In rude and unharmonious dance; 880
 Not like the sweet enthusiast's brisk advance,
 Who, clad in fawn skins, lightly tread,
 Shaking their ivy spears, the giddy round :
 But rolling cars among, and trampling steeds,
 That proudly bear their curb-embowed heads, 885
 And o'er the margent of Ismenus bound ;
 Thy joy to shake the thundering field ;
 'Gainst yon proud host, with martial fire,
 The dragon sons of Thebes to inspire,
 Each grasping fierce his glittering shield ; 890
 And, nigh the rampires as they stand
 In arms, to form each martial band.
 O Discord, dreadful is thy power,
 Rolling these storms of war, that lower
 Black o'er the monarchs of this earth, 895
 Who draw from Labdacus their birth !

ANTISTROPHE.

O thou, with waving woods imbrown'd,
 Spreading their broad shades o'er the savage race,
 With crusted snows thy craggy summit crown'd,
 Dear to the virgin goddess of the chase ; 900
 This Œdipus, in infant days,
 Though many a golden clasp adorn'd the child,
 To death devoted on thy borders wild,
 In an ill hour, Cithæron, didst thou raise.
 In ill hour did thy virgin wing, 905
 Dire sphinx, thou mountain monster, bring

Woes to this land with thy untuneful lay ;
 When o'er the walls thy circling flight
 Smote its desponding sons with pale affright ;
 When thy fierce talons seized their prey, 910
 And bore it to the rock's ærial brow :
 Thee hell's relentless king, with dread command,
 Unhallow'd fiend, to waste this groaning land,
 Sent from the gloom of Erebus below.
 In an ill hour, her flames to spread 915
 The sons of Œdipus between,
 With hurried step and maddening mien,
 Hath Discord rear'd her horrid head ;
 Fierce through the royal house to bear,
 And ruin'd realm, the rage of war. 920
 But honor, to the birth unknown,
 Stamps not the future growth its own :
 So from the unlawful bed these came,
 The mother's grief, the father's shame.

EPODE.

Thou, sacred earth, (the ancient fame, 925
 Barbaric though we are, had reach'd our ear,)
 Gavest the proud honors of the Theban name,
 The warrior host, their helmed heads to rear :
 To life each tooth thou badest arise,
 That arm'd the fiery-crested dragon's head. 930
 To grace the fair Harmonia's bridal bed
 Came in bright state the natives of the skies.
 Thou, when Amphion smote his lyre
 To sounds that listening rocks inspire,
 Thou saw'st, obedient to his powerful strains, 935
 Rise the firm wall, the rampired towers,
 'Twixt where his deepening flood Ismenus pours,
 And Dirce laves the verdant plains.
 From Io, radiant in her form divine,

(When now she lifts no more her horned brows, 940
 No more, her shape restored, a heifer lows,)
 The Theban monarchs boast their high-drawn line.

These, and a thousand glories more,
 Recorded in the rolls of fame,
 To grace this city's honor'd name, 945
 Here their successive radiance pour :
 High lifts her head the stately town,
 And proudly bears her martial crown.

TIRESIAS, *led by his daughter* MANTO, MENŒCEUS,
 CREON, CHORUS.

TIR. A little onward lead me, be an eye
 To these dark steps, my daughter, as the star 950
 That guides the mariner ; o'er level ground
 Direct my slow feet, lest we tread unsafe :
 Feeble thy father. In thy virgin hand
 Hold my oracular tablets, which I mark'd,
 Skill'd in each auspice of the flying wing, 955
 When in my consecrated seat my voice,
 Prophetic of the fates, foretells the future.
 My child Menœceus, son of Creon, tell me
 What of our way remains, that through the city
 Will bring me to thy father ; for my knee 960
 Fails me ; with pain I tread this length of way.

CRE. Be comforted : Tiresias, thou hast steer'd
 Nigh to thy friends thy foot. And thou, my son,
 Support him : like a car, its seat unfill'd,
 The foot of age wants every friendly guide. 965

TIR. Well, we are come : what means thy hasty
 message ?

CRE. Rest thee awhile ; no fear that we forget it :
 O'er-wearied with the way, recover spirit.

TIR. One night hath only pass'd since with much toil
 From Athens came I hither : there his spear 970

Eumolpus raised in war, wherein I made
 The sons of Cecrops glorious conquerors ;
 And therefore wear this golden crown thou seest,
 Rent from the foe, an honorable meed.

CRE. I hail the omen : that victorious crown 975
 Portends to us like victory ; and the storm
 Of war, thou know'st, from Argos rolls against us,
 And the fierce conflict threaten Thebes. Our king,
 Eteocles, in glittering mail array'd,
 Is issued to oppose the assailing foe ; 980
 But from thy mouth gave me in charge to learn
 What most behoves us do, to save the city.

TIR. Eteocles ! For him I would not ope
 My lips, but lock the answers of the gods
 In silence ; but to thee, since such thy wish, 985
 I will unfold them. Long this country, Creon,
 Hath been distemper'd, from the time that Laius,
 The gods averse, rashly become a father,
 Gave birth to the unhappy Œdipus,
 A husband to his mother ; and his hands 990
 Tore out his bleeding eyeballs ; from the gods
 Signal of wrath, and to astonish'd Greece
 A dreadful warning : which his sons awhile,
 Wishing to hide, by such weak subterfuge
 Hoping to escape the gods, insensate err'd : 995
 Not so content, nor honor to their father
 Gave they, nor liberty ; at which, incensed,
 The unhappy man breathed in his rage against them
 Horrible curses, his disease made keener
 By the dishonor added. My attempts, 1000
 My arguments avail'd not, save to make
 The sons of Œdipus my enemies.
 But fate hangs o'er them, Creon, soon to die
 Each by the other's hand ; and nigh the slain
 Numberless slain shall fall, the shock of arms 1005

Argive and Theban clashing, that this land
 Shall in deep sorrow weep her loss. And thou,
 Unhappy city, thou shalt bow thy head,
 Crush'd to the ground, unless my words shall find
 One to obey them : for be well assured, 1010
 No son of Œdipus shall reign at Thebes,
 Or ev'n inhabit here, as their wild rage
 Would desolate their country. But since evil
 Triumphs o'er good, one only way remains
 To safety ; but to unfold it would to me 1015
 Be dangerous ; for to those, whom fate designs
 To apply their healing nid, and save the city,
 'Tis a hard task : therefore I go ; farewell ;
 I am but one : if it must be, the event,
 Amidst the general ruin, I will bear ; 1020
 Alas, what ruin !

CRE. Stay thy steps, old man.

TIR. Withhold me not.

CRE. Stay : wherefore dost thou fly ?

TIR. I fly thee not, but fortune.

CRE. Yet disclose

What may preserve the people and the town.

TIR. Now wouldst thou know what soon thou wilt
 have cause 1025

To wish unknown.

CRE. Can I then have a wish

Not to preserve my country ?

TIR. Is thy wish

To know, thy zeal so strong ?

CRE. What stronger wish

Ought I to have, or what more ardent zeal ?

TIR. Then thou mayst hear the answers of the gods.
 But first I would be told where is Menœceus, 1031
 Who led me hither.

CRE. Nigh thee yet he stands.

TIR. Let him begone far from my oracles.

CRE. He is my son, nor will divulge what ought
Be held in silence.

TIR. Wilt thou in his presence 1035
That I speak this?

CRE. With pleasure will he hear
What so concerns the safety of the public.

TIR. Hear then the way my oracles declare,
What you must do, if you would save this state.
Since thy voice calls on fortune, for his country 1040
Thy son Menœceus thou must sacrifice.

CRE. What hast thou said? What were thy words,
old man?

TIR. 'Tis fated thus, and thou perforce must do it.

CRE. O what a world of ills in one brief moment
Thy voice hath utter'd!

TIR. Ills indeed to thee, 1045
But to thy country great and glorious safety.

CRE. I have no ears, no sense: perish my country!

TIR. Are these the words of Creon? O, how
changed!

CRE. Farewell; begone; thy oracles I want not.

TIR. Is truth no more, for that thou art unhappy?

CRE. Low at thy knees, O, by those reverend
locks,— 1051

TIR. Why kneel to me? The ills, which thou
wouldst know,
Are uncontrollable.

CRE. Declare them not,
Lock them in silence.

TIR. Should I be unjust?
Silence is not permitted me.

CRE. With me 1055
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou then slay my son?

TIR. To others that belongs; to me, to speak.

CRE. But whence to me this ill, and to my son?

TIR. Well hast thou ask'd, demanding thus the cause.
In the same cave where lay the earth-born dragon,
Guardian of Dirce's fountains, must thy son 1061
Be sacrificed, and give his vital blood,
Pour'd on the earth, to appease the wrath of Mars,
Incensed of old 'gainst Cadmus, and avenging
The slaughter of the earth-born dragon. This 1065
Performing, you shall win the aid of Mars.
Offspring for offspring, human blood for blood
If the earth receive, propitious will you find
That earth, which from the seed produced a harvest
Waving with golden helms : but from that race 1070
Sprung from the dragon's teeth one now must die.
Thou only of that race art left to us,
Thy blood from either parent flowing pure,
Thou and thy sons : Hæmon the nuptial contract
From the chaste sacrifice forbids, betrothed 1075
Though not espoused : this son, if for his country
Devoted, by his death shall greatly save
His native land, and to Adrastus work
Calamitous retreat, and to the Argives,
Presenting to their eyes a gloomy fate, 1080
But to the Thebans glory. Of these two
Choose which decree thou wilt ; or save thy son,
Or save thy country. Thou hast all from me
Demanded. Lead, my daughter, to my house.
Unwise is he, that studious bends his thoughts 1085
To this prophetic art : should he declare
Unwelcome truths, he would seem harsh to those
Whose fate his voice discloses ; if his soul,
To pity melting, softens to untruths
The oracles, he sins against the gods. 1090
By Phœbus only should the voice divine
Be utter'd, as to him fear is unknown.

CREON, MENŒCEUS, CHORUS.

CHO. Why art thou silent, Creon, thus aghast
In speechless trance? We too are struck with horror.

CRE. Who then shall speak, or what? One thing is
clear; 1095

I never on myself will draw that load
Of misery, for the state to expose my son
A victim: nature in each parent's breast
Implants a fond affection to his children;
No father can assign his son to die; 1100
Nor let the voice of praise sound in my ears,
Slaying my son. My life, mature in age,
With ready zeal would I lay down, to save
My country. But, my son, haste, ere this voice
Rings through the city: bid these froward seers 1105
Farewell, and fly this country, quickly fly;
For he will tell it to the chiefs, the leaders,
To each that heads the troops at the seven gates.
Prevent him, so shalt thou be safe; delay
Would now be fatal to us: Thou must die. 1110

MEN. And whither shall I fly? What state, what
friend,—

CRE. Farthest from hence is best.

MEN. To speak is thine,
Mine to obey.

CRE. Through Delphi speed thy flight.

MEN. And whither speed it?

CRE. To the Ætolian land.

MEN. And whither thence?

CRE. To far Thesprotia's coast. 1115

MEN. Dodona's hallow'd mounts?

CRE. Thou know'st the place.

MEN. What shall protect me?

CRE. The attending god

Shall be thy guide.

MEN. What treasure shall supply me?

CRE. Gold shall be sent by me.

MEN. Well hast thou said,
My father.

CRE. Haste then.

MEN. To thy royal sister, 1120
Jocasta, from whose breasts my infant lips
Drew their first nouriture, an orphan reft
Of my own mother, instant will I go,
As to salute her, and to save the city. 1124

CRE. Go then, and go with speed; form no delay.

MENŒCEUS, CHORUS.

MEN. Ye females, with an honest fraud my words
Have calm'd my father's fears, effecting thence
My purpose. Distant far he bids me fly,
Robbing his country of its fortune, me
To cowardice assigning: to his age 1130
This may be pardon'd; but for me, should I
Betray my country, whence I drew my breath,
There could be no forgiveness. Be assured,
I go to save my country; for this land
Freely I give my life. Were it not base, 1135
While those, whom no compulsion of the gods,
No oracle demands, advance their shields,
And unappall'd at death before the walls
Fight for their country, should I thus betray
My father, brother, city; and by flight 1140
Give signs of abject fear, scorn'd as a coward
Where'er I go? No, by the throne of Jove
Amidst the golden stars, by sanguine Mars,
Who will'd the warrior race, that from the ground
Uprose, should here be kings, I go to take 1145
My station on the highest battlements,

There pour my blood, and, as the prophet's voice
 Gave warning, to the dragon's darksome cave
 Plunge from that height. This is my firm resolve.
 To death devoted, no inglorious offering, 1150
 I go to save, to free this suffering land.
 If each would seize the occasion where his virtue
 Might aid his country, to the public good
 His share conferring, states, to less of ill 1154
 Exposed, would thenceforth stand secure, and flourish.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

It rose, on iron wings it rose :
 From the monster-teeming earth,
 And the viperous brood of hell,
 Drew the hideous fiend its birth,
 Nigh affrighted Thebes to dwell, 1160
 Big with mischief, big with woes.
 Once, where sacred Dirce springs,
 Clanging fierce thy horrid wings,
 Didst thou, darting from the sky,
 Seize and bear the youth on high ; 1165
 There, exulting o'er the prey,
 Chant thy unharmonious lay ;
 And, whilst Erinnyes nigh thee stood,
 Lap thy mangled country's blood.
 Blood that vengeful god must please, 1170
 Who could prompt to deeds like these.
 The matron's moans,
 The virgin's groans,
 Through each sorrowing house resound ;
 To dismal cries 1175
 Like cries arise,
 And shriek succeeds to shriek the affrighted city
 round :

Like the mingled din of war,
 Like the thunder's deepening roar;
 Such the groan that rent the air, 1180
 When high her prey the winged virgin bore :

ANTISTROPHE.

But, in Heaven's appointed hour,
 (Such the answers Phœbus gave)
 Œdipus, with fate his foe,
 Came this bleeding land to save. 1186

High the joys, the transports flow,
 Victor of her subtle lore,
 When he show'd the monster dead :
 But new miseries soon succeed ;
 From the nuptial bed they spring : 1190
 Son and mother !——Wretched king !

Sickening at the guilty rite,
 Nature starts with pale affright ;
 And pollution's baleful dews
 O'er the town their pest diffuse. 1195

Hence the curse, in anguish pour'd,
 Ruthless call'd the vengeful sword :
 Hence his sons, with mutual hate
 Hurried, rush upon their fate.——

Be fame his meed, 1200

Who dares to bleed,

When his suffering country calls :

He goes, he goes ;

To Creon woes

He leaves : but Thebes shall stand, and conquest grace
 her walls. 1205

With such sons may we be bless'd,
 Virgin queen, at whose command

Cadmus crush'd the dragon's crest,

Whence ravenous fiends ranged through this groaning
 land.

MESSENGER, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

MES. Open the gate. Who waits here? Call Jo-
casta 1210

Forth from the house. Open the gate. How slow!
Come from thy palace; hear me, royal spouse
Of Œdipus: lament and weep no more.

JOC. What tidings bring'st thou, friend, what new
misfortune?

SAY, is Eteocles dead? to bear whose shield 1215
Was ever thy important charge, to guard him
From flying darts. Or what fresh tale of wo?
Is my son dead, or lives he? Tell me, speak.

MES. He lives: I come to free thee from that care.

JOC. What of our walls, of our seven rampired
towers? 1220

MES. All firm, unshaken all: Thebes is not fallen.

JOC. Came they in danger of the Argive spear?

MES. Ev'n to the extreme of danger; but the arms
Of Thebes prevail'd, and quell'd Mycenæ's force.

JOC. Tell me, I charge thee by the gods, what
know'st thou 1225

Of Polynices? for my trembling soul

Is anxious for him: views he yet the light?

MES. The day thus far sees both thy sons alive.

JOC. O be thou bless'd! But, station'd in your
towers,

How drove you from the gates the embattled Argives?

Tell me, that I may bear the welcome tidings 1231

Of Thebes preserved to glad the blind old king.

MES. Soon as the son of Creon, on the towers

Conspicuous standing, drew his gloomy sword
And plunged it in his breast, with glorious zeal 1235

Dying to save his country, seven firm bands,
With their brave chiefs, at the seven gates thy son

Close-station'd, 'gainst the Argive foe a guard,
Horse ranged for fight 'gainst horse, and shield op-
posed

To shield, a ready aid, whene'er our force 1240

Might on their rampires feel disorder. Soon

From our high towers we view the Argive host,

Their white shields glittering to the sun, advanced

From high Teumessus: on with rapid march

They moved, and in embattled phalanx reach'd 1245

The trenches nigh the town: the song of war

They raised, and with the sounding trumpet gave

Fierce sign of battle, from the walls return'd

With notes as fierce. Parthenopæus first, 1249

Sprung from the Arcadian huntress, led his troop,

Horrent with close-wedged bucklers, 'gainst the gates

Of Neis: on his massy shield portray'd

Stands Atalanta, grasping in her hand

The distant-wounding bow, in act to wing

The flying shaft against the Ætolian boar, 1255

Domestic impress. To the Proetian gate

The fate-foretelling chief Amphiaraus

Advanced; the hallow'd victims load his car;

His shield no boastful argument displays,

No pageant marks his modest arms. Before 1260

The Ogygian gate Hippomedon rear'd high

His royal crest; and on his shield he bore

An Argus studded round with eyes; of these

Alternate some waked with the rising stars,

Some with the setting closed: this might we see, 1265

When now the chief lay breathless on the ground:

At the Omolean gate his post in arms

Held Tydeus: on his shield he bore impress'd

A lion's shaggy spoils; a Titan he,

A bold Prometheus, in his right hand waved 1270

A blazing torch, as he would fire the town.

To the Crenean gate his armed force
Thy Polynices led ; and on his shield,
The Potnian mares insculptured, start and bound,
Whirl'd by the well-form'd cavesson within, 1275
Around the boss, showing their fiery rage.
Not less than Mars to daring deeds inflamed,
Against the Electran gate fierce Capaneus
His phalanx led : his iron-sculptured shield
An earth-born giant held impress'd, whose strength
Bore on his shoulders a whole town, by force 1281
From its foundations rent with massy bars,
Emblem of ruin menaced to this city.
At the seventh gate Adrastus held his post :
His left hand bore his shield, whose ample orb 1285
A hydra, with a hundred hissing heads,
The boast of Argos, fill'd ; and from the walls,
Seized in their viperous jaws, the dragons bore
The sons of Thebes. Each impress I observed,
When to the chiefs I bore the word of war. 1290
First with our bows we fought, and missive spears,
Far-wounding slings, and fragments rent from rocks :
Their battle bleeding, Tydeus call'd aloud,
Thy son soon join'd his voice :—' Ye sons of Greece,
Why, ere these volley'd weapons thin our ranks, 1295
Rush we not on embodied to the gates,
Foot, horse, and rolling car ?' Soon as the word
Was heard, with furious expedition on they roll'd :
There many fell, their helms besmear'd with blood ;
And many from the walls might'st thou behold, 1300
Tumbled precipitate on the ground beneath,
Breathe out their lives, with streams of gushing blood
Moistening the thirsty earth. The Arcadian then,
(No Argive he, the son of Atalanta)
Impetuous as a whirlwind's stormy force 1305
Rush'd to the walls and cried,—' Flames here, a spade !'

As from their deep foundations he would heave
The shaking ramparts : but his headlong fury
Neptunian Periclymenus repress'd.
Rent from the battlements, a ponderous stone 1310
His strong hand heaved, and on his helm discharged :
Full on his head it fell, the enormous mass,
And crush'd the shatter'd bone ; his auburn locks
And purple-blooming cheeks distain'd with blood :
Him on the heights of Mænalus no more 1315
His beauteous-quiver'd mother shall receive
In life's warm glow. Soon as thy son beheld
His arms successful here, to other gates
He hasted ; I attended : Tydeus there
I saw ; in close array his warriors stood 1320
Grasping their shields, and to the battlements
Hurl'd their Ætolian spears ; the rampired heights
Our flying troops abandon ; these thy son,
Like a bold hunter, cheer'd, and to the towers
Led back embattled : thence to other gates 1325
(The martial ardor here revived) we haste.
But with what words can I express the rage
Of Capaneus ? He to his post advanced,
A ladder in his hand of length to scale
The walls ; and in his pride vaunted aloud, 1330
That not the awful fire of thundering Jove
Should check him mounting o'er the rampire's height
To storm the town. Thus menacing, amidst
A storm of hurtling stones, he dared the ascent,
Beneath his shield collected, and had reach'd 1335
The battlements, when Jove with thunder smote him :
The earth rebellow'd to the roar, that all
Trembled with dread ; and from the steps his limbs
Asunder torn, as with an engine's force,
Were scatter'd diverse ; towards Olympus flew 1340
His hair, his blood fell on the earth ; his hands,

His feet, roll'd whirling like Ixion's wheel,
 And to the ground his flaming body fell.
 When now Adrastus to the Argive arms
 Saw Jove averse, back o'er the trench he led 1345
 His forces; ours the favoring signal fill'd
 With added courage: on their whirling cars
 They drove, mail-clad; and through the deep array
 Of Argos in close fight their spears advanced. 1349
 All now was rout; some died; some from their cars
 Fell headlong, o'er them roll'd the bounding wheels;
 Axle with axle clash'd; the dead on heaps
 Lay whelm'd beneath the dead. Thus have we stay'd
 Destruction from our towers, this day at least;
 The future (whether Fortune to this land 1355
 Assigns success) is Heaven's important care.

CRO. Conquest is glorious: should the gods con-
 ceive

Kinder intents, I too should share the joy.

JOC. Well have the gods appointed, Fortune well:
 My sons are living, and my country stands 1360
 Rescued from threatening danger. In my nuptials
 With Œdipus the unhappy Creon seems
 Alone to suffer, of his son deprived,
 With glory to the public, to his soul
 A private grief. But say, resume thy tale: 1365
 This past, what measures will my sons pursue?

MES. Forbear the rest: thus far hath Fortune
 bless'd thee.

JOC. Distrust hangs on thy words: I must be told.

MES. Wouldst thou have more than that thy sons
 are safe?

JOC. I would be told if farther I am happy. 1370

MES. Let me have leave to go; my office calls
 me,

Attendant on thy son, to bear his shield.

Joc. Thus close, thus dark, thou dost conceal some ill.

Mes. I would not cloud thy joy by uttering ill.

Joc. To fly me, through the air must thou escape. 1375

Mes. Why wilt thou not, these joyful tidings told,
Dismiss me? Why must I relate the ill?
Thy sons are bent on most unseemly deeds
Of dreadful daring, from each host apart
To engage in single combat: to the sons 1380
Of Thebes alike and Argos have they spoken
The word that ill becomes them. From his station
On the high tower Eteocles began,
Silence to either army first proclaim'd:—
'Warriors of Greece, that on these fields impress 1385
Your hostile steps; ye Argive chiefs, and you,
Embattled Thebans, sell not here your lives
In Polynices' quarrel, nor in mine.
I from that danger bid you cease; alone
I will engage my brother: if I slay him, 1390
Mine be the realm alone; but should I fall,
To him I yield the city; you, no more
In arms contending, shall return to Argos,
Nor leave your sweet lives here: of Thebes' high
race,
Enough lie breathless on the ensanguined ground.'
He spoke, and Polynices from his ranks 1396
Rush'd forth, with joy assenting to his words;
And all of Argos, all of Thebes, with shouts
Applauded, deeming just the terms proposed.
Soon to the space 'twixt host and host advanced 1400
The chiefs in truce, and ratified their faith
On each side with the sanction of an oath.
Now, whilst in brazen mail the youthful sons
Of Œdipus invest their limbs, our chief

With friendly zeal the Theban nobles arm ; 1406
 Their chief the Argive princes : radiant now
 They stood ; no sign of fear, none of remorse
 Obscured their brows ; but with infuriate rage
 Each grasp'd his spear advancing : as they pass'd,
 Their ardor with these words their friends inflamed :—
 ' Now, Polynices, is it thine to raise 1411
 To Jove the trophied image ; now to give
 Glory to Argos.' To Eteocles,—
 ' Now dost thou fight thy country's champion, now
 Let conquest grace thy arms ; the royal prize, 1415
 A kingdom waits thee.' With such words their
 souls

They kindle to the fight. The sacred seers,
 The victims slain, attentive stand, and mark
 The increasing fires, the bursting gall, the flames
 Ascending, which a twofold omen bear, 1420
 Portending conquest one, and one defeat.
 But, hast thou aught of power to soothe this rage,
 Or words with wisdom fraught, or charmed strain,
 Go, check thy sons, prevent this horrid fray ;
 For great the danger, as the prize is great ; 1425
 And in the bitterness of grief thy tears
 Will flow, of both thy sons at once deprived.

Joc. Antigone, come forth ; come forth, my child :
 Not to the dance, nor to the virgin bower
 The appointment of the gods now leads thee forth ;
 But it behoves thee, joining with thy mother, 1431
 To stay the mighty chiefs, thy brothers, bent
 On death, from falling each by the other's hand.

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANT. To what new terrors doth my mother's voice
 Before the house thus plaintive call her child ? 1435
 Joc. O daughter, fatal to thy brothers' lives

This sad mischance.

ANT. What may this mean?

JOC. They stand

In single fight opposed.

ANT. Ah me ! my mother,

What wouldst thou say?

JOC. Nothing of welcome sound :

But follow me.

ANT. My virgin chamber left, 1440

Ah, whither shall I follow ?

JOC. Through the army.

ANT. My blushes 'midst the crowd——

JOC. This is no time

For bashfulness.

ANT. What wouldst thou I should do?

JOC. Prevent thy brothers' contest.

ANT. How prevent it?

JOC. Fall down with me, and grasp their knees.

ANT. Lead thou, 1445

Lead to the lists : the time brooks no delay.

JOC. Haste, daughter, haste. If yet I may prevent
My sons before their combat, heaven's fair light
Shall cheer my life ; but if thou comest too late,
'Tis ruin all ; thou too art lost ; and I 1450
Will clasp my dying sons, and die with them.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Wo, wo, wo, wo !

Trembling, shuddering with my fears,

Thrilling horror shakes my frame ;

Pity fills mine eyes with tears, 1455

Pity for the afflicted dame ;

For the griefs her heart that rend,

Whilst her furious sons contend.

Pierced through mail and shatter'd shield,
 Which shall stain the crimson'd field? 1460
 O Jove, O earth, O fatal strife!
 Brother seeking brother's life:
 Which, ah, which shall I deplore
 Breathless, weltering in his gore?

ANTISTROPHE.

O earth, earth, earth! 1465
 Shaking each his angry lance,
 Each inflamed with lion-rage,
 Breathing slaughter they advance,
 Soon in dreadful fight to engage:
 Soon from many a flowing wound 1470
 Shall their blood distain the ground.
 Higher raise the notes of wo:
 For the slain my tears shall flow.
 Ruin nigh and slaughter wait,
 And this sun decides their fate: 1475
 Dreadful, dreadful is their doom,
 Dark the Fury's baleful gloom.

But cease the strain: for, see, with clouded brow,
 Creon advances to this royal house.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. Ah me! which first shall I lament, for which
 Shall I first pour the warm tear? For myself, 1481
 Or for my country? Such a darkening cloud
 Hangs o'er it, that we walk amidst the gloom
 Of Acheron. My son too, he is fallen,
 Fallen for his country; to himself achieving 1485
 A glorious name, but sorrowful to me.
 Him lately from the dragon's craggy cave,
 Self-slain, unhappy youth! these hands have borne.
 Through all my house loud sounds the voice of wo.

Hence with the trembling steps of age I come 1490
 Seeking my aged sister, that her hand
 May bathe my son, no more my son, and lay
 Decent his breathless body : it becomes
 The living to revere the gods below,
 Paying these pious honors to the dead. 1495

CHO. Thy sister is gone hence ; and, on her steps
 Attending, went the young Antigone.

CRE. Whither ? What new misfortune call'd her ?
 Tell me.

CHO. Her sons, she heard, in single combat lift
 The lance, contending for this royal house. 1500

CRE. What say'st thou ? Whilst my fondness sor-
 rowing hung

On my son's corse, I came not to this knowledge.

CHO. Long since thy sister went : ere this, I think
 The conflict is begun, which shall decide
 The fate of these fierce sons of Œdipus. 1505

CRE. Ah, there I see the signal : that man's eye,
 That clouded brow, declares his fatal message.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MES. Ah wretched me ! what language shall I use,
 What words ?

CRE. Then we are lost indeed : there breathes
 No music in this prelude to his tale. 1510

MES. Ah wretched me ! for mighty are the ills
 I come to utter.

CRE. To calamities
 Already pass'd, what new hast thou to tell ?

MES. No more thy sister's sons behold the light.

CRE. Great cause of grief to me and to the state.

MES. Hearest thou this, O house of Œdipus ? 1516
 Fallen are thy sons, sunk in one common ruin.

CHO. That, if instinct with sense, it would shed tears.

CRE. O ponderous misery! What a load of ills,
Of woes, oppresses me! Ah wretched me! 1520

MES. When thou shalt know the accumulated ills,—

CRE. And can there be a heavier load than this?

MES. With her two sons thy sister lies in death.

CHO. Raise, raise the cry of wo, and o'er your
heads 1524

Your white hands, smote with many a sounding stroke.

CRE. Wretched Jocasta, bath thy life, thy nuptials
Found this sad end, caused by the riddling sphinx?—
But say, how fell the sons of Œdipus?

How wrought his vengeful curse the ruin? Tell me.

MES. That on the arms of Thebes before the towers
Success attended, is to thee well known; 1531

For not so wide the circuit of her walls

Extends, but that each circumstance must reach

Thy knowledge. But when now the youthful sons

Of the old Œdipus in radiant arms 1535

Had sheathed their limbs, advancing to the space

'Twixt host and host the rival chieftains stood,

Ready to lift their spears in single fight:

His eye towards Argos Polynices roll'd,

And utter'd thus his prayer:—'Imperial Juno, 1540

Goddess revered, (for thine I am; since, join'd

In marriage with the daughter of Adrastus,

Thy land received me an inhabitant,)

Give me to kill my brother, and to stain

With his warm life-blood this victorious hand 1545

In the fierce contest: an inglorious crown

I ask, to kill a brother.' Tears gush'd forth

From many, as their eyes each glanced on each,

Pitying their fate. But to the hallow'd dome

Of Pallas, glorious with her golden shield, 1550
 His eyes Eteocles turn'd, and thus address'd her:—
 ' Daughter of Jove, give my victorious spear,
 Lanced by this hand, to pierce my brother's breast,
 And kill him, for he came to waste my country.'
 But when the torch was hurl'd, which, as the sound
 Of the Tyrrhenian trumpet, gives the signal 1555
 Of bloody battle, furiously they rush'd
 In dreadful opposition: as two boars,
 Whetting their savage tusks, their jaws besmear'd
 With foam, they met impetuous with their spears;
 But each beneath his round shield lay at ward, 1561
 That the steel glanced in vain: if either raised
 His eye above the verge, the other drove
 With eager haste full at his face the lance;
 But to the grated openings that adorn 1565
 The rim, his eye with caution each applies,
 And disappoints the spear. With throbbing hearts,
 More than the combatants, their friends around
 Intent and anxious for their chieftain glow.
 It chanced against a stone Eteocles 1570
 Impress'd his foot, thus turn'd without the verge
 Of his broad shield: this Polynices saw,
 And where the part was open to the blow,
 Drove through the plated greave his Argive spear.
 All the Pelasgian troops shouted aloud. 1575
 His shoulder in the effort left exposed
 The wounded chief observed, and aim'd his lance
 With well-directed force against the breast
 Of Polynices, to the sons of Thebes
 Requiring joy; but faithless to his hand 1580

1555 This alludes to an ancient custom in use before the invention of trumpets, where a torch-bearer, whose person was sacred, advancing into the middle space between the combatants, threw his torch as a signal for battle.

The steel point broke. Now in the headless truncheon

No more confiding, quick a backward step
He moved, then seized and whirl'd a rugged stone :
Full on the spear the ponderous marble fell,
And crash'd it in the midst : the combat now 1585
Was equal, of the spear each chief deprived.

Their falchions then they grasp'd, and furious rush'd
To closer conflict ; shield to shield advanced
Sustain'd the clashing tumult of the fight.

Eteocles, with presage of success, 1590
Call'd to his aid the wily discipline

Learn'd in Thessalia ; from the pressing toil
Withdrew, his left foot backward, guarding well
His body ; with his right advancing, wheel'd
Oblique, and plunged his sword deep in his bowels,
Driven to the chine. The unhappy Polynices 1596
Stood writhing with his torturing wound awhile,
Then fell ; the blood fast welling from the wound.

And now the victor, as secure of conquest,
Threw down his sword to strip him of his arms, 1600
Heedless of him, and on the spoil intent ;

A fatal oversight : he, breathing yet,
And grasping in his dreadful fall his sword,
Scarce raised it as he lay ; Eteocles
Stooping received it in his heart. Thus both 1605
Together fell, together lie in blood,
Biting the ground, the conquest undecided.

CRE. O Œdipus, with friendly grief I mourn
Thy ills : the god hath ratified thy curse.

MES. Yet give me hearing, whilst I speak of ills
Added to ills. Expiring on the earth 1611
Her sons were fallen, when the unhappy mother,
Attended by her virgin daughter, came
With zealous speed : soon as she saw their life

Fast-flowing from their wounds, with shrieks she
cried ;— 1615

' Too late, my sons, too late to succor you,
I come : ' then, clasping each, o'er each she mourn'd,
Wailing the painful care with which her breasts
Nourish'd their infancy. Their sister too,
Companion of her griefs, with sighs address'd them ;—

' Ye dear supporters of your mother's age, 1621

My much-loved brothers, how have you betray'd

My virgin hopes ! ' With pain his grasping breath

Eteocles drew, but at his mother's voice

Stretch'd forth his hand moist with the dews of death :

He utter'd not a word, but with his eyes, 1626

He spoke to her in tears, signal of love :

But Polynices, yet alive, his eyes

Cast on his sister and his aged mother,

And spoke these words :— ' Destruction on our heads

Is fallen, O mother ! yet I pity thee, 1631

My sister, and my brother stretch'd in death :

A friend, though made a foe, is yet a friend.

O thou, to whom I owe my birth ; and thou,

My sister, in my native earth entomb me, 1635

And pacify the exasperated state :

Be this, at least, of my paternal soil

My portion, though the royal seat be lost.

Let thy dear hand, my mother, close my eyes :

(And with his own he drew it to their lids) 1640

Now, farewell both ; the shades of death surround me.'

Thus each, expiring, their unhappy lives

Resign'd together. When the mother saw

This dire event, impatient of her grief,

From her dead son she snatch'd the reeking sword,

And did a deed of horror ; through her throat 1646

She thrust the steel, and on their much-loved bodies,

Each in her arms embracing, lies in death.

Straight to the strife of words the armies rose :
 We claim'd the conquest for our chief, and they 1650
 For theirs : amidst the leaders stern debate
 Was kindled ; these contend that Polynices
 First won the advantage with his spear ; and those
 That victory for neither had declared,
 Where both were slain. Then from the bickering
 troops 1655

Antigone withdrew : they rush'd to arms.
 The sons of Thebes had providently sat
 Reclining on their shields : prevention then
 Was ours ; and sudden on the Argive host,
 Not yet accountred in their arms, we fell ; 1660
 And none sustain'd the attack, but hasty rout
 And flight fill'd all the plains ; the blood of thousands,
 That fell beneath the spear, flow'd on the earth.
 Thus were we victors in the fight ; and some
 The trophied image raise to Jove, whilst some 1665
 Snatch from the Argives slain their shields, and send
 The spoils to grace the town ; others attend
 Antigone, and this way bear the dead,
 To share the last sad office of their friends.
 Thus on one part the state in her success 1670
 Rejoices, on one part bewails her loss.

CHO. No more the ruin of this royal house
 Pierces our ears ; our eyes may now behold
 Advancing to these gates the unhappy three,
 That sunk together to eternal night. 1675

[The dead bodies borne.]

ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ANT. Unveil'd these locks, whose graceful ringlets
 wave,
 Shading my tender cheeks ; the purple glow
 Of virgin modesty, that lights my face,

I dread not to expose, thus on the dead,
 Wild with my grief, attending : from my hair 1680
 I rend the golden caul : ye gorgeous vests,
 Radiant with crimson dyes, I cast you off,
 Ill suited to this mournful pomp of death.
 Wo, wo ! unhappy me ! Alas my brother !
 Poor Polynices ! fatal was thy name, 1685
 Portending strife. O Thebes, I feel thy woes !
 Thy strife, no strife, but slaughter stain'd with gore,
 Horrible, mournful, desolates the house
 Of Œdipus. What voice shall I invoke,
 Its dismal harmony attuned to groans, 1690
 Accordant to my tears ;—my tears, that flow
 For these three kindred bodies bathed in blood,
 My mother and her sons ; a cruel joy
 To sell Erinny's ? She in ruins crush'd
 The house of Œdipus, what time, (ah me !) 1695
 Unfolding her inexplicable charms,
 Unhappy father, thou didst give to death
 The savage and discordant-screaming sphinx.
 Did ever Grecian or barbaric dame,
 Any of noble birth in times of old, 1700
 Thus see their dear friends slain, and weep like me ?
 Wretch that I am, what strains of wo break from me
 O, that some bird, high on the waving bough
 Of oak or fir, her mother lost, would join
 Her griefs to mine, and echo back my notes 1705
 In harmony of sorrow, wailing thus
 These gaping wounds ! For ever shall I lead
 A solitary life, for ever wail,
 As now, the tears still streaming from mine eyes.
 To whom, whom first shall I devote these locks 1710
 Rent from my head ? Where shall I offer them ?
 Lay them upon my mother's breasts of milk,
 Or on the deep wounds of my slaughter'd brothers ?—

Come forth, my aged father, leave thy house,
 Bringing thy sightless eye ; show, **Œdipus,** 1715
 Thy wretched age ; thou, that within the house,
 Darkling amidst the gloom thine own hands wrought,
 Dost drag a lingering life. Hear'st thou my voice,
 Dark-wandering in thy hall, or on thy couch
 Resting thy age-enfeebled, weary foot ? 1720

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒDI. Why, virgin, with these lamentable cries,
 Why hast thou brought my blind, staff-guided steps,
 Call'd from my couch within my darksome chamber
 To light, a gray and unsubstantial phantom,
 A body from the tomb, a fleeting dream ? 1725

ANT. Unhappy are the tidings, O my father,
 Which thou shalt hear. Thy sons no more behold
 The light of heaven : thy wife no more, whose care,
 With constant tenderness, beside thy staff
 Supported thy dark steps. Alas, my father ! 1730

ŒDI. Alas, my miseries ! for to groan, to wail
 These things, is yet allow'd me. By what fate,
 These three, how left they this ethereal light ?
 Tell me, my child.

ANT. I mean not to reproach,
 I mean not to insult ; but with deep sorrow 1735
 I speak : thy evil genius, O my father,
 Hurling with swords, and fire, and ruthless combats,
 Rush'd on thy sons.

ŒDI. Ah me ! unhappy me !

ANT. Wherefore these groans ?

ŒDI. My sons !

ANT. The paths indeed
 Of sorrow wouldst thou tread, if, by the car 1740
 Of yon refulgent sun illumed, thine eyes
 Might o'er these lifeless bodies roll their orbs.

ŒDI. The ruin of my sons needs not a comment :
 But my unhappy wife, by what ill fate,
 Tell me, my child, am I deprived of her? 1745

ANT. Her mournful tears fast streaming in the sight
 Of all, before her sons she bared her breast ;
 Suppliant she bared her breast in suppliant guise.
 Before the Electran gates, where with the lotus
 The mead abounds, her sons the mother found 1760
 Contending with their spears, like two young lions
 Bred in one cave, whilst from their gaping wounds
 The kindred gore outwell'd ; for now had Mars
 Presented that libation, bloody, cold,
 And Pluto had received it. From the dead 1765
 She snatch'd the sword, and plunged the ruthless blade
 Deep in her body : nigh her sons she fell,
 In death embracing each. This day, my father,
 The god that wrought these things hath crush'd our
 house

With all the accumulated weight of wo. 1760

CHO. This day hath to the house of Œdipus
 Been the beginning of unnumber'd woes.
 May the succeeding days bring happier fortune !

CRE. No more of lamentation, as the time
 Calls our attention to the funeral rites. 1765

Now hear me, Œdipus, and mark my words.
 To me thy son Eteocles assign'd
 The sceptre of this land, the nuptial dowry
 To Hæmon, with the bed of this thy daughter,
 Antigone. No longer then will I 1770

Permit thee to inhabit here : full clearly
 Tiresias spoke, that whilst thou dwellest in it,
 This city should not flourish : quit it then.
 I speak not this to insult thee ; nor am I
 Thine enemy ; but thy avenging demons 1775
 I dread, lest aught of ill the state should suffer.

CRD1. O fate, how wretched, how oppress'd with ills,
 Such as man never suffer'd, hast thou form'd me
 Ev'n from my birth! Me, ere I saw the light
 Of life, the voice of Phœbus from his shrine 1780
 Declared the future murderer of my father,
 Wretch that I am! Soon as I breathed this air,
 Laius, who gave me life, to death assign'd me,
 As an ill-fated foe, beneath whose hand
 It was his destiny to die; a prey 1785
 To savage beasts, my wretched infancy
 Craving the breast, he cast forth; yet from thence
 Was I preserved. O, had Cithæron sunk
 Down to the yawning gulfs of Tartarus,
 Which did not then destroy me! As a slave 1790
 To Polybus the ruthless power assign'd me.
 Ill-fated wretch! I slew my father, mounted
 My mother's hapless bed, and begot sons
 My brothers: these have I destroy'd, from Laius
 The curse receiving, and transmitting it 1795
 Down to my sons: for nature form'd me not
 So senseless, to devise such stern designs
 'Gainst these poor sightless eyes, 'gainst my sons'
 lives,
 But by some god impelling. Be it so.
 What then, unhappy, shall I do? What guide 1800
 Will my dark steps accompany? Will she,
 That here lies dead? Well know I, were she living,
 She would attend me. Will that noble pair,
 My sons? I have no sons. My youthful vigor,
 Will that procure me the supports of life? 1805
 But whence? Why, Creon, wilt thou kill me thus?
 For thou wilt kill me, if thou drive me forth.
 Yet shall I not, by grovelling at thy knees,
 Show myself abject; no inglorious deed
 Shall stain the splendor of my former honors. 1810

CRE. Well hast thou said, thou wilt not grasp my knees:

This land I would not suffer thee inhabit.
Now for these bodies: that behoves us bear
Within the royal house; but him, who came
With banded powers to lay his country waste, 1815
Forth from the borders of this injured land
Cast him unburied. To the sons of Thebes
Be this proclaim'd: Whoever shall be found
Crowning his corse, or covering it with earth,
He dies for his offence. No; let him lie 1820
Unwept, unburied, to the birds a prey.
But thou, Antigone, forbear thy grief
For these three dead; retire within the house:
Think what becomes a virgin, and expect 1824
The approaching day, when Hæmon's bed awaits thee.

ANT. To what a wretched fortune are we fallen!
Alas, my father! More for thee I mourn
Than for the dead: thine are not partial ills
Enwoven with good, but one sad scene of wo.
Yet let me ask thee, our new lord—why thus 1830
With insults drive my father from this land?
Why 'gainst the unhappy dead pronounce this sentence?

CRE. It is not mine: Eteocles so will'd.

ANT. Unwise in him; unwise in thee to obey.

CRE. Is it not just to execute commands? 1835

ANT. No, if they're ill, and given through rancorous hate.

CRE. Is it not just to cast him to the dogs?

ANT. Such vengeance hath the sanction of no law.

CRE. What, though his country's foe, which least became him?

ANT. To his ill-fortune paid he not his life? 1840

CRE. Ay; and let vengeance wait his outcast corse.

ANT. What the offence to claim his share of empire?

CRE. This man, be well assured, shall lie unburied.

ANT. I, though the state forbid, will bury him. 1844

CRE. Thyself then near his body wilt thou bury.

ANT. 'Tis glorious for two friends to lie together.

CRE. Lay hold on her, and bear her to her chamber.

ANT. Off; touch me not; I will not quit this body.

CRE. Fate hath decreed what appears harsh to thee,——

ANT. It is decreed the dead be not insulted. 1850

CRE. That o'er his corse none lays the humid earth.

ANT. By my dead mother, by Jocasta, Creon,——

CRE. Thy prayers are vain: thou canst not here prevail.

ANT. Permit me this at least, to bathe his body.

CRE. This too is interdicted by the state. 1855

ANT. Yet let me seemly bind his cruel wounds.

CRE. No honor, virgin, mayst thou show his body.

ANT. Yet, dearest brother, will I kiss thy lips.

CRE. Bear not this ominous mourning to thy nuptials.

ANT. What, whilst I live, shall I e'er wed thy son?

CRE. Of strong necessity: how shun his bed? 1861

ANT. That night shall find me sprung from Danaus.

CRE. Mark her bold spirit: with what contempt she speaks!

ANT. The conscious sword be witness to my oath.

CRE. And wherefore dost thou wish to shun these nuptials? 1865

ANT. With my unhappy father will I fly.

CRE. 'Tis generous of thee, but there's folly in it.

ANT. Wouldst thou know more? I will ev'n die with him.

CRE. Hence then: thou shalt not kill my son: be-gone.

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

ŒDI. This ready zeal, my child, demands my praise.

ANT. A bride, whilst my poor father strays alone! 1871

ŒDI. Remain thou bless'd: my own ills will I cherish.

ANT. Who then shall to thy blindness minister?

ŒDI. Where'er my fate to fall, there will I lie.

ANT. Where now is Œdipus? His honors where?

ŒDI. Sunk: one day saw my glory and my ruin. 1876

ANT. Ought I not then to share thy miseries?

ŒDI. To stray an exile with an eyeless father
Is to a daughter shameful.

ANT. To the proud
It may, but not to humble modesty. 1880

ŒDI. Lead me then nearer: let me touch thy mother.

ANT. There; with thy hand touch her most dear remains.

ŒDI. O wretched mother! O most wretched wife!

ANT. In this sad state, crush'd with her ills, she lies.

ŒDI. Where lies Eteocles? Polynices where? 1885

ANT. In death together stretch'd they lie before thee.

ŒDI. Guide my blind hand to their unhappy faces.

ANT. There; as I guide thy hand, touch thy dead sons.

ŒDI. Ye wretched ruins of a wretched father!

ANT. O Polynices, name most dear to me! 1890

ŒDI. Now, daughter, is the oracle fulfill'd,—

ANT. What? Hast thou more of ills to add to ills?

ŒDI. That wandering, exiled, I should die at Athens.

ANT. What citadel of Athens shall receive thee?

ŒDI. Colonus, sacred to the equestrian god. 1895
But come, to thy blind father be assistant,
Since 'tis thy wish to share his hapless flight.

ANT. Go then to hapless flight: reach thy dear hand,
My aged father; take me for thy guide,
A favoring gale to waft thy shatter'd bark. 1900

ÆDI. I go, my child: be thou my wretched leader.

ANT. Wretched indeed we are: Thebes hath no
virgin

So very wretched.

ÆDI. Which way shall I set
My aged foot? Reach me my staff, my child.

ANT. This way, come this way with me: this way,
this way 1905

Advance thy foot, my father, thy worn strength
Weak as the phantom of a sickly dream.

ÆDI. O miserable exile! Wo is me!
In mine old age he drives me from my country.
Alas, my sufferings!

ANT. Dwell not on thy sufferings: 1910
Justice regards not, nor with vengeful hand
Chastises the oppressor's insolence.

ÆDI. Yet reach'd I that sublime and heavenly lore,
Which led to glorious conquest, when I solved
The dark enigma of the virgin sphinx. 1915

ANT. Why dost thou mention her disgrace? No
more

Speak of thy former glories: sufferings now,
And miseries wait thee, O my father, driven
An exile from thy country far to die.
With tears of fond affection towards the virgins, 1920
My dear companions, with thee will I go
Far from my country, wandering in sad state
Unseemly to a virgin.

ÆDI. Generous spirit!

ANT. That spirit in my father's wretchedness
Shall make me noble. Yet my heart is rent 1925
At this indecent insult on my brother,

Cast out to moulder, an unburied corse.
 Him in the secret earth these hands, my father,
 Though certain death await me, shall entomb.

ŒDI. Go show thee to thy friendly train of virgins.

ANT. I have enough of wailings.

ŒDI. At the altars 1931
 Present thy vows.

ANT. They are ev'n now o'erloaded
 With my afflictions.

ŒDI. To the mountains go,
 Where unapproach'd, save by the Mænades,
 Bacchus his temple holds.

ANT. Once on those heights 1935
 Clad in the Theban dress, a fawn's light skin,
 I led the sacred dance of Semele :
 An unrequited honor to the gods.

ŒDI. Illustrious citizens of Thebes, my country,
 Behold your Œdipus, whose piercing mind 1940
 Solved the mysterious charm, and crush'd the power
 Of the blood-ravening sphinx, the greatest then
 Amongst you ; now unhonor'd, wretched, driven
 An outcast from your land !—But why in vain
 Lament I thus and wail, since mortal man 1945
 Must bear the hard necessity of fate ?

CHO. O Victory, I revere thy sober power :
 Guard thou my life, nor ever cease to crown me !

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